

1 AN ACT  
2 RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCY RESPONSE; AMENDING  
3 THE SEARCH AND RESCUE ACT; PROVIDING RESPONSE PROTOCOLS FOR  
4 FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL OR TRIBAL AGENCIES WHEN NEW MEXICO  
5 SEARCH AND RESCUE IS REQUIRED IN SEARCH AND RESCUE  
6 EMERGENCIES.

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8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

9 SECTION 1. Section 24-15A-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,  
10 Chapter 107, Section 3, as amended) is amended to read:

11 "24-15A-3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Search and  
12 Rescue Act:

13 A. "search and rescue" or "SAR" means the  
14 employment, coordination and utilization of available  
15 resources and personnel in locating, relieving the distress  
16 and preserving the lives of and removing survivors from the  
17 site of a disaster, emergency or hazard to a place of safety  
18 in the case of lost, stranded, entrapped or injured persons;

19 B. "board" means the state search and rescue  
20 review board;

21 C. "AFRCC" means the air force rescue coordination  
22 center, which is the federal agency responsible for  
23 coordinating federal SAR activities within the inland region  
24 pursuant to the national search and rescue plan;

25 D. "state SAR control agency" means the department

STBTC/SB 353  
Page 1

1 of public safety;

2 E. "state SAR mission initiator" means the  
3 New Mexico state police officer so appointed and SAR trained;

4 F. "state SAR resource officer" means the official  
5 located within the department of public safety responsible  
6 for coordinating SAR resources and administering the state  
7 SAR plan;

8 G. "field coordinator" means a person certified by  
9 the board with special training and expertise responsible for  
10 the efficient organization and conduction of a SAR mission;

11 H. "civil air patrol" means the civil air patrol  
12 division of the department of military affairs and an  
13 air force auxiliary responsible for coordinating air searches  
14 that are authorized by the AFRCC;

15 I. "mission" means each separate group effort in  
16 the employment, direction and guidance of personnel and  
17 facilities in searching for and rendering aid to persons lost  
18 or in distress;

19 J. "chief" means the chief of the New Mexico state  
20 police division of the department of public safety;

21 K. "director" means the director of the technical  
22 and emergency support division of the department of public  
23 safety;

24 L. "SAR emergency" means an incident requiring  
25 urgent SAR assistance; and

1 M. "tribe" or "tribal" includes federally  
2 recognized Indian nations, tribes and pueblos."

3 SECTION 2. A new section of the Search and Rescue Act  
4 is enacted to read:

5 "SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL--STANDARDIZED SEARCH  
6 AND RESCUE CRITERIA.--

7 A. The state SAR resource officer, in consultation  
8 with local, state, federal and tribal emergency responders,  
9 search and rescue volunteer organizations and the board,  
10 shall establish standardized criteria for notifying the state  
11 SAR control agency of a SAR emergency. The consultation  
12 process shall include the distribution of proposed protocols  
13 to stakeholders listed in this subsection, followed by a  
14 comment period, followed by the final protocol being  
15 developed. The consultation process shall be repeated when  
16 modifications are considered to the notification protocol.

17 B. The state SAR resource officer shall provide  
18 training to local, state, federal and tribal emergency  
19 response entities, public safety answering points and  
20 volunteer SAR organizations in the protocols for reporting a  
21 SAR emergency.

22 C. Unless specified otherwise in a memorandum of  
23 agreement between the state SAR control agency and the local  
24 jurisdiction where a SAR emergency is located, local and  
25 state emergency response entities and public safety answering

1 points responsible for emergency response shall promptly  
2 notify the state SAR control agency by phone or other  
3 approved communication technology of a potential need of  
4 state SAR personnel and resources.

5 D. Notification to the state SAR control agency of  
6 a SAR emergency shall not prevent the deployment of other  
7 agencies' personnel or resources pursuant to a request for  
8 aid, including fire departments, law enforcement agencies and  
9 emergency medical services."

10 SECTION 3. A new section of the Search and Rescue Act  
11 is enacted to read:

12 "SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS--NOTIFICATION OF  
13 AGENCIES WITH RELEVANT EMERGENCY RESPONSE JURISDICTION.--

14 After being notified of a SAR emergency, the state SAR  
15 control agency shall promptly notify the entity that  
16 requested assistance and other appropriate authorities having  
17 jurisdiction, including affected land management agencies if  
18 a SAR emergency has occurred on the agency's or agencies'  
19 land, that state SAR personnel and resources have been  
20 activated. If the standardized criteria of a SAR emergency  
21 is not met to activate resources or if SAR resources are not  
22 available, the state SAR control agency shall notify the  
23 entity that requested assistance that SAR resources have not  
24 been deployed. If the state SAR control agency receives the  
25 initial notification of a SAR emergency, the SAR control

1 agency shall promptly notify the affected authorities having  
2 jurisdiction of where the local SAR emergency is anticipated  
3 to be located and whether resources or personnel have been  
4 deployed. In the event that the state SAR control agency is  
5 unable to deploy SAR resources for a SAR emergency, the SAR  
6 control agency shall facilitate and assist in securing  
7 alternate SAR resources to support the affected  
8 jurisdiction."

9 SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
10 provisions of this act is January 1, 2026. \_\_\_\_\_

STBTC/SB 353  
Page 5