

Wyoming Search and Rescue Program Policies and Procedures

Updated 7/05

PURPOSE

This manual shall define the responsibilities of the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council as established by W.S. Title 19 Chapter 13 Article 3.

Search and Rescue (SAR) is defined as the employment, coordination and utilization of available resources and personnel in relieving distress, preserving life and removing survivors from the site of a disaster, emergency or hazard to safety in case of lost, stranded, entrapped or injured persons. The goal of the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council is to assist Wyoming sheriffs, who are charged by state statute to conduct SAR operations, with the execution of this mandate by fostering quality search and rescue resources throughout the state and providing reimbursement for eligible expenditures.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council consists of eleven members, as defined by statute:

- 3 Wyoming County Sheriffs (4 year terms)
- 1 Wyoming Peace Officer (4 year term)
- 5 Wyoming Citizens (4 year terms)
- 1 Wyoming County Commissioner (4 year term)
- 1 Director, **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security** (indefinite term)

The Governor, based in part on the recommendations of the existing Council membership, appoints council members.

In order to provide maximum geographical representation, it shall be the Council's policy to recommend to the Governor candidates that reside in counties that are not represented by other members at the time the vacancy is filled. (See Attachment A for current geographical distribution of council members.)

Council members appointed by virtue of their elected positions (sheriffs, county commissioner) shall resign from the council immediately upon leaving their elected positions.

The **WOHS Director or his designee** shall serve as the permanent Executive Secretary to the Council.

The council will meet at least twice annually, including one financial session and one policy session.

Council members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings and functions or provide the Executive Secretary with an acceptable reason for non-attendance prior to the meeting date. In cases of repeated non-attendance, the Council membership may vote to recommend removal of any member, with the exception of the Executive Secretary.

Council members must sign an Oath of Office upon appointment. Members may not serve without fulfilling this requirement.

Members must sign a Code of Ethics upon appointment. Breach of this code may result in removal from the Council by the Governor.

The members shall serve without compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable costs for their travel expenses as provided by statute.

COUNCIL VOTES AND OFFICIAL ACTIONS

A simple majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum and shall be required for any official vote on council action.

The following shall be the regular order of business at Council meetings:

1. Call to Order / Roll call
2. Approval of minutes of previous meeting
3. Committee reports
4. Unfinished business
5. New business
6. Establish next meeting date
7. Adjournment

In questions of parliamentary procedure, Robert's Rules of Order shall prevail.

Sheriffs present at a meeting will select a meeting chairman. If no sheriffs are in attendance at a meeting, the order of succession for meeting chairman shall be:

1. **WOHS** Director or designee (Executive Secretary)
2. Peace officer
3. Citizen with most uninterrupted seniority (cf. other citizens)

The Council Executive Secretary or his **WOHS** designee shall maintain official council documentation and records.

The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council may establish and abolish ad hoc and/or standing committees to oversee special projects or charters as deemed necessary. Committees established by the Council may contain expert associates (non-Council members) who are deemed by the Council as having substantial knowledge in the committee's mission. Any action taken by the Council, based on a committee recommendation, must first receive majority endorsement of the full and formal membership of the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council.

The Council may add to, delete, or otherwise amend these policies and procedures as deemed necessary.

FUNDING

The Wyoming Business Council's Division of State Parks and Cultural Resources and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department collect voluntary \$1.00 donations on recreational licenses and registrations and routinely transfer these funds to the **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security (WOHS)**.

WOHS serves as the fund manager and operates using the guidance from the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council and W.S. Title 19 Chapter 13 Article 3.

The Council may consider utilizing the fund for the following purposes only:

1. Reimbursement of eligible operational expenses incurred by sheriffs in the conduct of approved missions annually;
2. Training of SAR personnel statewide
 - a. Council-sponsored
 - b. County reimbursements
3. Development and maintenance of SAR overhead teams;
4. Purchase and maintenance of specialized SAR equipment to be used statewide
 - a. Council-sponsored, state purchased
 - b. Council-acquired, county reimbursed
5. Fund administration including, but not limited to:
 - a. Office supplies
 - b. Travel, meals, lodging of members and necessary staff
 - c. Council meeting expenses
6. Public awareness (marketing) campaigns

Council-sponsored and county requests for reimbursement of training and equipment for Search and Rescue, if paid for by the fund, will be considered as statewide-use assets and automatically added to the resource directory (see section entitled, "Resource Directory and Callout Procedures").

In compliance with subsection (b) of W.S. 19-13-301, the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council shall give funding priority to item number one above. To that end, the Council will establish a fund balance minimum of \$400,000.

Expenditures from items two, three, four, five and six above may be considered in any order and amount based on the budget and priorities established by the council each year, provided that sufficient funds are in the account.

OPERATIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

Participation in the fund is voluntary. Any Sheriff's office in Wyoming may make a claim for reimbursement for costs directly incurred from SAR operational activities.

Counties choosing to make claims against the fund must comply with the following procedures to receive reimbursement:

Counties will be required to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) annually with the **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security** as a condition of receiving reimbursement. This is a requirement of the State Attorney General. **No longer a requirement.**

1. Counties must contact **WOHS** 24 hour Duty Officer for a State Mission Number within eight (8) hours after the start of a mission. The Duty Officer can be reached at (307) 777-4900 during business hours or anytime through the Wyoming Highway Patrol Dispatch Center at (307) 777-4321 or (800) 442-9090. **New procedure: County faxes mission number and information to WOHS within seven (7) days of start of mission.**
2. Counties must provide specific information about their missions including but not limited to:
 - a. Residency status of search subjects
 - b. Type of mission (search, rescue, assist)
 - c. Subject activity type (hunter, boater, camper, et al)
 - d. Number of subjects
 - e. Incident commander and phone number
 - f. Mission location
 - g. Date / Time mission began
 - h. Date / Time mission ended
 - i. Resolution
 - j. If victims found deceased, general cause of death (suicide, homicide, injuries, etc.)
 - k. List of specific resources called in from other jurisdictions, and the corresponding identification number listed in the SAR Resource Directory (if applicable)
3. The Incident Command System shall be used to manage Search and Rescue operations.
4. Counties must submit claims for the appropriate performance period (April 1 – March 31) by May **1st** each year. Missions from prior years shall not be reimbursed unless extenuating circumstances necessitate the re-activation or continuation of an unresolved, non-criminal mission.
5. Claims must be submitted on the most current version of the **WOHS**-provided forms.

6. Only one Search and Rescue annual claim per county shall be accepted for reimbursement. By statute, that claim must be submitted from the Sheriff's office.
7. There shall be no prepayment for budget shortfalls. Responsibilities for the SAR program in Wyoming rest with Sheriffs and remain a county issue.
8. High cost missions (\$10,000 and over) will be considered for reimbursement after other missions have been reviewed. The Council reserves the right to prorate reimbursement for high cost missions when full reimbursement would cause undue depletion of the fund.
9. Any missions conducted outside the State of Wyoming must be done under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Copy of MOU must be attached to claim.
10. County, local SAR organization, and private individual equipment losses claimed must be detailed on SAR Form 3.
11. Receipts provided by vendors must be itemized ("Miscellaneous" not acceptable).

Reimbursement claims approved by the Council shall bear the signatures of the meeting chairman and the Executive Secretary.

UNALLOWABLE OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

1. Claims shall not be reimbursed if the county did not directly incur SAR expenses.
2. Items purchased before or after missions and not directly related to the mission are not reimbursable.
3. As a general rule, body recovery is not an eligible cost under the Wyoming Search and Rescue Fund. However, when the recovery of a body goes beyond the technical expertise and the duty of a coroner's office, then the recovery of the body may be considered a part of the search and rescue mission. Each such instance will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be documented to the satisfaction of the Council.
4. Claims submitted with insufficient documentation (fiscal and narrative), as determined by the Council, will not be reimbursed.
5. Claims for personal property damage, directly related to SAR, will be considered on a case-by-case basis only.

6. Wyoming sales tax is not reimbursable when paid by a government or non-profit entity. However, sales tax may be reimbursed when the county reimburses a private individual for a qualifying expense.
7. Payment by the county commissioners does not guarantee reimbursement by the Council. Fiscal jurisprudence must be evident for each expense claimed.

The above listing is not all-inclusive. The Council reserves the right to refuse any expense it determines does not meet the spirit and/or intent of the legislation, policies, and procedures governing search and rescue in Wyoming.

REIMBURSEMENT CLAIMS APPEAL

Counties may make requests for reconsideration on any expense denied by the Search and Rescue Council. A sheriff must submit the request for reconsideration, in writing, to **WOHS** within 30 days of notification of their claim status.

After council members vote on the appeal, **WOHS** will compile the results, document the decision, and send notification to the applicant within 30 days of receipt of the appeal and/or any supplemental documentation required to properly evaluate the appeal.

Decisions on appeals are final. No other considerations shall be made.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY AND CALL OUT PROCEDURES

The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council shall maintain an electronic directory of resources available for use statewide for the purpose of supporting search and rescue operations in Wyoming. Utilization of this resource is voluntary. The directory shall contain the following categories:

1. Specialized equipment
2. Overhead teams
3. SAR personnel with specialized and/or Council-endorsed training
4. Council-endorsed SAR instructors
5. Specialty skill teams

The Executive Secretary, or his designee (hereinafter referred to as “Directory Manager”), will be responsible for the electronic compilation and updates to the directory.

The Directory Manager shall update the resource directory at least annually with input provided by Wyoming Sheriffs and the Wyoming Search and Rescue Association.

NOTE: Wyoming Sheriffs are responsible for verifying the quality of the resource information provided for inclusion in the directory. The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council and the **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security** do not guarantee the accuracy of the information in the directory.

The Directory Manager shall password-protect the directory and provide read-only access to users.

Sheriffs, SAR operations commanders, incident commanders, and their designees may request resources from the directory for use in any SAR operation using the following procedure:

1. Determine what specific resources are needed;

2. Make direct contact with resource holder, arranging for procurement of resource.
3. Record identification number of requested resource(s) as found in the SAR Resource Directory;
4. Convey identification number and specific resource info to **WOHS** Duty Officer when closing out a mission number.

SAR REGIONS

The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council hereby adopts the four (4) regions created by the Wyoming Search and Rescue Association. (See Attachment B for regional map.)

TRAINING

Sheriffs are responsible for verifying qualifications and certifications of all SAR personnel in their jurisdictions. The Wyoming Search and Rescue Council and the **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security** do not guarantee the expertise of any SAR personnel utilized in the conduct of search and rescue operations in Wyoming. However, the Wyoming Search and Rescue Council encourages SAR personnel throughout Wyoming to obtain education and training, and to participate in activities that enhance their abilities as search and rescue responders. To that end, the Council endorses a statewide certification program for all search and rescue personnel.

The standards closely follow those used by the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) and/or other specialty skill organizations endorsed by the Council.

Participation in the program is voluntary.

The certification program will serve as the foundation for the personnel listings in the Wyoming SAR Resource Directory. Only those SAR professionals who have achieved certification at levels endorsed by the Council will be considered for inclusion in the directory.

The certification program is beneficial for the quality of search and rescue operations throughout the State of Wyoming as it:

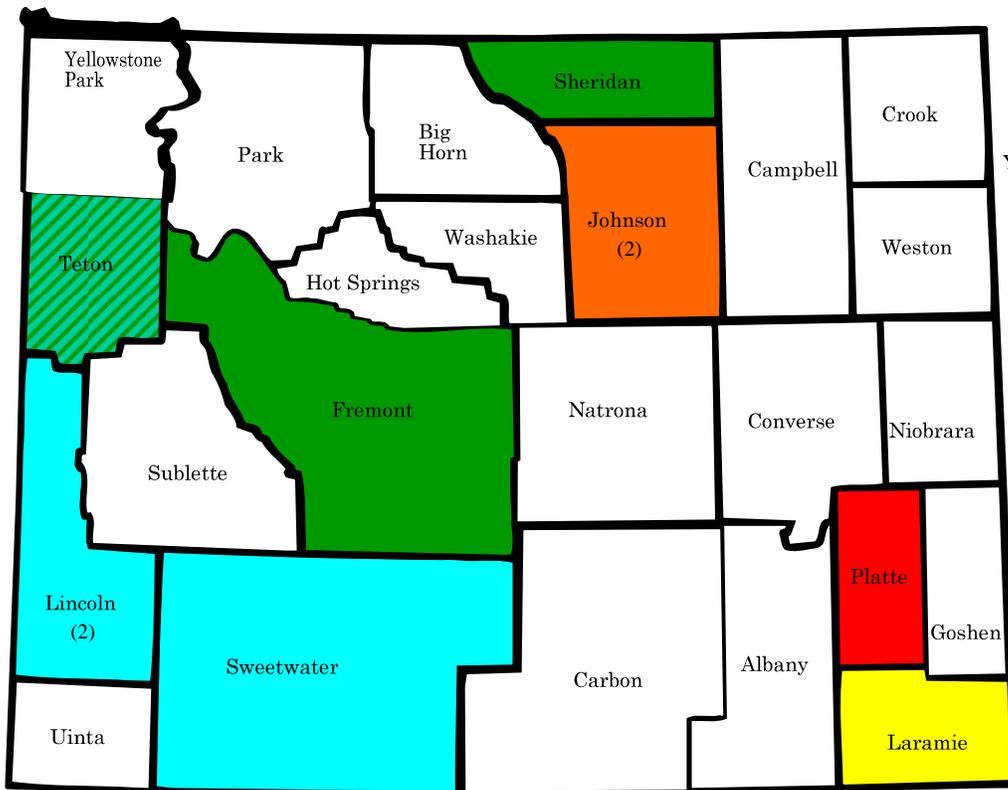
1. Defines a clearly visible set of professional goals for all personnel; and
2. Offers public officials a set of standards to use when selecting personnel to fill SAR positions.

Training records for Council-sponsored courses will be maintained by the **Wyoming Office of Homeland Security** and shall be available upon request by the applicant or authorized SAR personnel statewide.

Attachment A:

WYOMING SEARCH & RESCUE COUNCIL

Rev.
7/04



Green: Sheriff
Red: County
Commissioner
Orange: Peace
Officer
Blue: Citizen
Yellow: **WOHS**

Attachment B:

WY SEARCH & RESCUE REGIONS

Rev.
1/02

