

# Wyoming Search and Rescue Program **Policies and Procedures**

*Updated 11/28/2015*

## **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 Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department collect voluntary \$2.00 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 including loss damage claims 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.

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.

## **OPERATIONAL REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURES**

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.

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.

A County Sheriff's Office choosing to make claims against the fund must comply with the following procedures to receive reimbursement:

A County Sheriff's Office must submit a Search and Rescue Mission Report to Wyoming Office of Homeland Security within seven (7) days of the mission start date. The reports can be received via email and/or fax to the following: Fax: 307-635-6017 email: [deeann.ragland@wyo.gov](mailto:deeann.ragland@wyo.gov) and [nicole.galvan@wyo.gov](mailto:nicole.galvan@wyo.gov)

1. A County Sheriff's Office 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. List of specific resources called in from other jurisdictions.
  
2. A County Sheriff's Office must submit claims for the appropriate performance period (April 1 – March 31) by May 1st each year. Non-Operational requests and training reimbursement requests must be submitted by October 1<sup>st</sup> for the claim period of September 1<sup>st</sup>

(of the previous year) to August 31<sup>st</sup> (of the current year). Missions from prior years shall not be reimbursed unless extenuating circumstances necessitate the re-activation or continuation of an unresolved, non-criminal mission.

3. Claims must be submitted on the most current version of the WOHS-provided forms.
4. 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.
5. There shall be no prepayment for budget shortfalls. Responsibilities for the SAR program in Wyoming rest with Sheriffs and remain a county issue.
6. 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.
7. County, local SAR organization and private individual equipment losses claimed must be detailed on SAR Form 3.
8. 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.
8. 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.

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.

## **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.

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.

## **REIMBURSEMENT CLAIMS APPEAL**

A County Sheriff's Office 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 Wyoming Office of Homeland Security within 30 business days excluding holidays of notification of their claim status.

After council members vote on the appeal, Wyoming Office of Homeland Security will compile the results, document the decision, and send notification to the applicant within 30 business days excluding holidays of receipt of the appeal and/or any supplemental documentation required to properly evaluate the appeal.

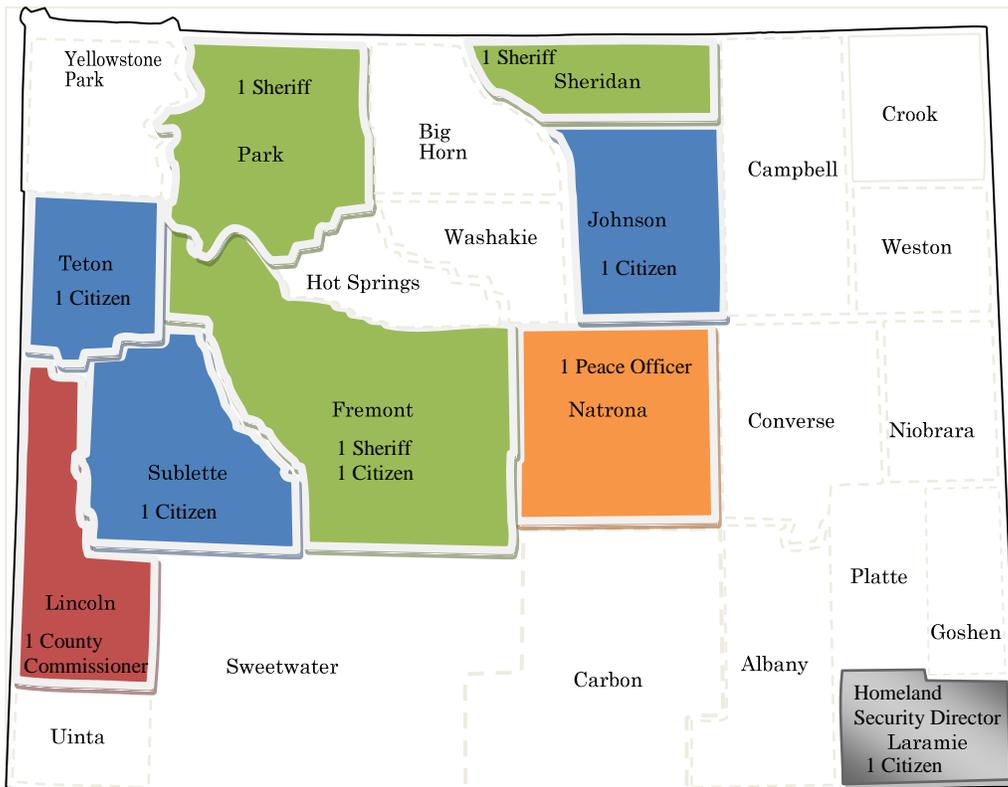
Decisions on appeals are final. No other considerations shall be made.

## SEARCH AND RESCUE COUNCIL

Attachment A:

### ***WYOMING SEARCH & RESCUE COUNCIL***

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**Green – Sheriff**  
**Red – County Commissioner**  
**Orange – Peace Officer**  
**Blue – Citizen**  
**Gray – State Homeland Security Director**