

1 SENATE BILL 353

2 **57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 AN ACT

11 RELATING TO SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCY RESPONSE; AMENDING THE
12 SEARCH AND RESCUE ACT; PROVIDING RESPONSE PROTOCOLS FOR
13 FEDERAL, STATE OR LOCAL AGENCIES WHEN NEW MEXICO SEARCH AND
14 RESCUE IS REQUIRED IN SEARCH AND RESCUE EMERGENCIES.

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

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

19 "24-15A-3. DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Search and Rescue
20 Act:

21 A. "search and rescue" or "SAR" means the
22 employment, coordination and utilization of available resources
23 and personnel in locating, relieving the distress and
24 preserving the lives of and removing survivors from the site of
25 a disaster, emergency or hazard to a place of safety in the

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1 case of lost, stranded, entrapped or injured persons;

2 B. "board" means the state search and rescue review
3 board;

4 C. "AFRCC" means the air force rescue coordination
5 center, which is the federal agency responsible for
6 coordinating federal SAR activities within the inland region
7 pursuant to the national search and rescue plan;

8 D. "state SAR control agency" means the department
9 of public safety;

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

12 F. "state SAR resource officer" means the official
13 located within the department of public safety responsible for
14 coordinating SAR resources and administering the state SAR
15 plan;

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

19 H. "civil air patrol" means the civil air patrol
20 division of the department of military affairs and an air force
21 auxiliary responsible for coordinating air searches ~~[which]~~
22 that are authorized by the AFRCC;

23 I. "mission" means each separate group effort in
24 the employment, direction and guidance of personnel and
25 facilities in searching for and rendering aid to persons lost

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1 or in distress;

2 J. "chief" means the chief of the New Mexico state
3 police division of the department of public safety; ~~and~~

4 K. "director" means the director of the technical
5 and emergency support division of the department of public
6 safety; and

7 L. "SAR emergency" means an incident requiring
8 urgent SAR assistance."

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

11 "[NEW MATERIAL] SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL--
12 STANDARDIZED SEARCH AND RESCUE CRITERIA.--

13 A. The state SAR resource officer, in consultation
14 with local, state and federal emergency responders, shall
15 establish standardized criteria for notifying the state SAR
16 control agency of a SAR emergency.

17 B. The state SAR resource officer shall provide
18 training to personnel employed in emergency response, emergency
19 dispatch and public service access points for federal, state
20 and local agencies in the protocols for reporting a SAR
21 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, a person
25 employed in emergency response, emergency dispatch or a public

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1 service access point for a federal, state or local agency who
2 receives a request for aid shall promptly notify the state SAR
3 control agency by phone or other approved communication
4 technology of a potential need of state SAR personnel and
5 resources.

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

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

13 "[NEW MATERIAL] SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS--
14 NOTIFICATION OF AGENCIES WITH RELEVANT EMERGENCY RESPONSE
15 JURISDICTION.--After being notified of a SAR emergency, the
16 state SAR control agency shall promptly notify the entity that
17 requested assistance and other appropriate jurisdictions,
18 including federal land management agencies if a SAR emergency
19 has occurred on its land, that state SAR personnel and
20 resources have been activated. If a decision is made not to
21 activate resources, the state SAR control agency shall notify
22 the entity that requested assistance that SAR resources have
23 not been deployed."

24 SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the
25 provisions of this act is January 1, 2026.

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