

SENATE TAX, BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION  
COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR  
SENATE BILL 353

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

AN ACT

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

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

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

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

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

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;

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

9 M. "tribe" or "tribal" includes federally  
10 recognized Indian nations, tribes and pueblos."

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

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

15 A. The state SAR resource officer, in consultation  
16 with local, state, federal and tribal emergency responders,  
17 search and rescue volunteer organizations and the board, shall  
18 establish standardized criteria for notifying the state SAR  
19 control agency of a SAR emergency. The consultation process  
20 shall include the distribution of proposed protocols to  
21 stakeholders listed in this subsection, followed by a comment  
22 period, followed by the final protocol being developed. The  
23 consultation process shall be repeated when modifications are  
24 considered to the notification protocol.

25 B. The state SAR resource officer shall provide

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underscored material = new  
~~[bracketed material] = delete~~

1 training to local, state, federal and tribal emergency response  
2 entities, public service answering points and volunteer SAR  
3 organizations in the protocols for reporting a SAR emergency.

4 C. Unless specified otherwise in a memorandum of  
5 agreement between the state SAR control agency and the local  
6 jurisdiction where a SAR emergency is located, local and state  
7 emergency response entities and public service answering points  
8 responsible for emergency response shall promptly notify the  
9 state SAR control agency by phone or other approved  
10 communication technology of a potential need of state SAR  
11 personnel and resources.

12 D. Notification to the state SAR control agency of  
13 a SAR emergency shall not prevent the deployment of other  
14 agencies' personnel or resources pursuant to a request for aid,  
15 including fire departments, law enforcement agencies and  
16 emergency medical services."

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

19 "[NEW MATERIAL] SAR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS--  
20 NOTIFICATION OF AGENCIES WITH RELEVANT EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
21 JURISDICTION.--After being notified of a SAR emergency, the  
22 state SAR control agency shall promptly notify the entity that  
23 requested assistance and other appropriate authorities having  
24 jurisdiction, including affected land management agencies if a  
25 SAR emergency has occurred on the agency's or agencies' land,

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1 that state SAR personnel and resources have been activated. If  
2 the standardized criteria of a SAR emergency is not met to  
3 activate resources or if SAR resources are not available, the  
4 state SAR control agency shall notify the entity that requested  
5 assistance that SAR resources have not been deployed. If the  
6 state SAR control agency receives the initial notification of a  
7 SAR emergency, the SAR control agency shall promptly notify the  
8 affected authorities having jurisdiction of where the local SAR  
9 emergency is anticipated to be located and whether resources or  
10 personnel have been deployed. In the event that the state SAR  
11 control agency is unable to deploy SAR resources for a SAR  
12 emergency, the SAR control agency shall facilitate and assist  
13 in securing alternate SAR resources to support the affected  
14 jurisdiction."

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

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