

Revised April 10, 2023

**Public Event Protocol****1. Objective/Purpose:**

During public events the NMMSAR Unit's assignments can vary greatly. During public events many things will be asked of members who choose to participate, be it on horseback, or as support to the horse team. These things are not required to be a member of the Unit or to go on a search; these requirements are merely for public events. Many of these events are fundraising type events for the Unit. It is imperative for the future of the Unit that these events are successful and have a safe outcome for all involved. Public events are a great way to build Unit camaraderie, team building and a great experience for all. This Policy outlines what is required to become certified to attend public events, what is expected while attending public events and how to conduct your behavior while attending as a Unit member. Remember the Unit is representing much more than merely the Unit. The Unit is an ambassador for the horse world in general, the Search and Rescue community, and overall good will ambassadors.

**2. Scope:**

This policy applies to all NMMSAR members and covers both initial and on-going evaluation.

**3. Policy:**

All members attending public events must be certified by NMMSAR minimum riding qualifications. This means that you and your horse, or horses, must attend and meet the riding qualifications each year, before being considered for public events. Some public events may require the horse and rider team to meet additional standards and sensory acceptance beyond the NMMSAR Annual Mounted Evaluations (reference NMMSAR Policy #11). If horse and rider team have passed these qualifications, they will be allowed to attend public events.

The following guidelines shall be followed at every event.

- a. NEVER approach a person who is on foot while mounted. Allow them to approach you only if it can be done safely. If moving through a crowded area, INSIST that people clear a path. AVOID crowded pathways/areas whenever possible.
- b. ALWAYS be aware of every inch of your horse, and INSIST that people approach from the front by positioning your horse in a way that encourages this.
- c. ALWAYS select a clear, unoccupied area to mount and dismount, as this is a time when a rider is in least control.
- d. ALWAYS consider if all horses in group are tolerating the situation. LEAVE immediately if there is ever a question of safety. Look for signs of agitation and correct the situation immediately.
- e. REMEMBER public events are not the time to train. It is the time to reinforce good training that has been done at home.
- f. Above all be PROFESSIONAL, and POSITIVE.

- g. If a horse and rider team is deemed unsafe during a public event, the Team Leader has the authority to have horse and rider leave the event. Future involvement in public events will be then determined by the Review Board.

#### **4. Expectation of Unit Members:**

##### ATTIRE

Every Unit member attending public events shall be expected to be in uniform (polo-shirt or event uniform, will be announced prior to event). Member shall make every attempt to be presentable, uniform in good shape.

##### ATTITUDE

Each attending member shall have a positive attitude towards the event and other members, but most of all the public. During all public events safety is the Unit's number one priority, safety of the public and others in the unit. Attitude is everything in having a successful public event. Remember that while on horseback your job is merely to be a good will ambassador, and/or to observe and report.

##### SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

During public events, especially high-profile events (i.e., Balloon Fiesta) awareness of the situation is critical; do not become distracted by idle conversation or other non-essential distractions. When horses are "parked" it is easy to let your awareness of other member horses misbehaving or becoming unsettled. But an alert member will be aware of the situation and can quickly correct it. Stopping in congested areas to talk with the public, sell pins or deal with horse poop issues brings additional risk to our Unit especially if there are other nearby potential threats to our horses. Public safety, horse safety and rider safety should be our primary goals for a successful event. As in any team situation all participants need to recognize that there will be weaker riders and horses and we are only as good as those individuals and animals. Therefore, it is critical that we are mindful of all riders and animals, especially in stressful situations.

##### BEHAVIOR

Remember that you are now representing the Unit to the public, which could be anywhere from a few people to a hundred thousand people. The use of profanity is prohibited.

##### TEAM LEADERS

Every search mission has a Team Leader. During public events Team Leaders also will be assigned and given duties that will consist of, but not limited to:

- a. General direction of riders
- b. When to send riders back to trailer
- c. Radio contact or assigning radio communications to a member
- d. Shall be final authority if problem arise
- e. Shall have situational awareness at all times

#### **5. Public Event Protocol**

##### PRE-RIDE BRIEFING

Each and every time a group of members is to ride out for a public event a pre-ride briefing shall be held. The purpose is so that each rider shall know duties beforehand. A Team Leader shall be designated and has the final authority while on the ride. Disputes can be settled back at camp and NOT while on horseback.

RIDE DE-BRIEFING

Every time the public event ride is over, there will be a short ride de-briefing about what went well and what went wrong. This will be the time to discuss problems, offer suggestions, and mitigate risks to our Unit.

TEAM LEADER QUALIFICATIONS

Team Leaders shall be selected by experience, horse and rider knowledge, and overall public event experience. A qualified Team Leader shall exhibit calmness, leadership, and situational awareness. Number of events attended does not automatically make a Team Leader. It takes the right individual to perform as a leader during stressful public events.

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