

**New Mexico**

**Search and Rescue**

**ACT**

NMSA 1978, 24-15A-1 to 24-15A-6, et seq.

# THE SEARCH AND RESCUE ACT (LAW)

## ARTICLE 15A

### Search and Rescue

#### **24-15A-1. Short title.**

This act [[24-15A-1](#) through [24-15A-6](#) NMSA 1978] may be cited as the "Search and Rescue Act".

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-1, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 1.

#### **24-15A-2. Purpose of act.**

It is the purpose of the Search and Rescue Act:

- A. to prepare, organize and coordinate efforts of federal, state and local governmental agencies and volunteer organizations for prompt and efficient search, location, rescue, recovery, care and treatment of persons lost, entrapped or in physical danger;
- B. to further coordinate national and state search and rescue agreements; and
- C. to develop and administer a statewide plan for search and rescue.

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-2, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 2.

#### **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 case of lost, stranded, entrapped or injured persons;
- B. "board" means the state search and rescue review board;
- C. "AFRCC" means the air force rescue coordination center, which is the federal agency responsible for coordinating federal SAR activities within the inland region pursuant to the national search and rescue plan;
- D. "state SAR control agency" means the department of public safety;
- E. "state SAR mission initiator" means the New Mexico state police officer so appointed and SAR trained;
- F. "state SAR resource officer" means the official located within the department of public safety responsible for coordinating SAR resources and administering the state SAR plan;
- G. "field coordinator" means a person certified by the board with special training and expertise responsible for the efficient organization and conduction of a SAR mission;
- H. "civil air patrol" means the civil air patrol division of the department of military affairs and an air force auxiliary responsible for coordinating air searches which are authorized by the AFRCC;
- I. "mission" means each separate group effort in the employment, direction and guidance of personnel and facilities in searching for and rendering aid to persons lost or in distress;
- J. "chief" means the chief of the New Mexico state police division of the department of public safety; and

K. "director" means the director of the technical and emergency support division of the department of public safety.

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-3, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 3; 1979, ch. 202, § 8; 1989, ch. 204, § 16.

**24-15A-4. State search and rescue resource officer; position created.**

A. The position of "state search and rescue resource officer" is created within the department of public safety.

B. The state search and rescue resource officer shall be a noncommissioned employee.

C. The state search and rescue resource officer shall be the chief administrator of the state search and rescue plan.

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-3, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 4; 1979, ch. 202, § 8; 1989, ch. 204, § 17.

**24-15A-5. State search and rescue resource officer; powers and duties.**

The state search and rescue resource officer shall, with the approval of the director:

A. compile, maintain and disseminate an inventory of resources available in the state;

B. compile, maintain and disseminate rosters of persons, agencies and organizations available for search and rescue purposes;

C. develop a training program for the certification of search and rescue instructors and, by regulation, adopt a system of certification of search and rescue persons;

D. act as contact agent for the state in search and rescue matters;

E. develop and periodically review requirements for insurance coverage for search and rescue volunteers;

F. coordinate the training of mission initiators and field coordinators; and

G. maintain records of missions at the state SAR control agency.

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-5, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 5; 1979, ch. 202, § 10; 1989, ch. 204, § 18.

**24-15A-6. State search and rescue review board created; membership; duties and responsibilities; terms.**

A. There is created a policy advisory committee, to be known as the "state search and rescue review board", whose duty it is to evaluate the operation of the New Mexico search and rescue plan; evaluate problems of specific missions; and make findings of fact and recommendations to the chief, director and other appropriate authorities. The board shall consist of the state search and rescue resource officer, who shall be a nonvoting member, and seven members appointed by the governor as follows:

(1) the secretary of public safety or his designee;

(2) the secretary of health or his designee;

(3) a representative of the civil air patrol division of the department of military affairs;

(4) a representative of the New Mexico emergency services council;

(5) a member certified as a search and rescue person;

(6) a member of the New Mexico sheriff's association;

(7) the chief of the New Mexico state police division of the department of public safety or his designee; and

(8) a member of the general public who shall act as chairman of the board and who shall vote only in case of a tie.

B. The board shall have the duty and responsibility to:

- (1) meet at least quarterly or more frequently at the call of the chairman;
- (2) evaluate the operation and effectiveness of the state SAR plan and make recommendations to the director;
- (3) evaluate the operational effectiveness of specific missions, make findings of fact and recommendations to the chief and other appropriate authorities for the elimination of problems and the improvement of overall conduct of the mission;
- (4) hold hearings and invite individuals to appear and testify before the board and reimburse such witnesses for travel expenses incurred;
- (5) prepare a report for the attorney general's office in cases of victim hospitalization or death; and
- (6) with the approval of the chief, certify field coordinators and confirm certification of SAR persons.

C. The governor shall appoint the seven appointed members for staggered terms of three years each made in such a manner that the terms of not more than three members expire on January 1 of 1979, 1980 and 1981. Thereafter, appointments shall be made so that the terms of not more than three members expire on January 1 of each year. Vacancies shall be filled by appointment by the governor for the unexpired term. Any member of the board who misses more than two consecutive meetings shall automatically be removed as a member of the board.

**History:** 1978 Comp., § 24-15A-6, enacted by Laws 1978, ch. 107, § 6; 1979, ch. 202, § 11;

1983, ch. 296, § 28; 1989, ch. 204, § 19; 1993, ch. 15, § 1.