



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY POLICIES & PROCEDURES



Subject: Search and Rescue Field Coordinator		Policy Number: SAR: 02
Revision Number: 02	Effective Date: 2/24/2026	Original Issue Date: 011/19/2012

1) PURPOSE

- a) The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the qualification, promotion, and duties of Search and Rescue (SAR) Field Coordinators

2) POLICY

- a) It is the policy of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety to ensure that Field Coordinators are ranked and eligible for promotion and able to manage SAR missions in the State of New Mexico in accordance with the New Mexico Search and Rescue Act, NMSA 1978, 24-15A to 24-15A-6, et seq., and the New Mexico Search and Rescue Plan.

3) APPLICABILITY

- a) This policy is applicable to all New Mexico Field Coordinators (FC) and Area Commanders (AC).

4) REFERENCES

- a) **New Mexico Search and Rescue Act, NMSA 1978, 24-15A to 24-15A-6.**
- b) **New Mexico Search and Rescue Plan.**
- c) **NMAC 10.24 Search and Rescue**
- d) **SAR: SOP-12 SAR Field Coordinator Trainee**

5) DEFINITIONS

- a) **Field Coordinator (FC) and Area Commander (AC)** – SAR Responders holding Certification from the Department of Public Safety, New Mexico State Police.
- b) **Mission Initiator (MI)** - The individual assigned by the New Mexico State Police whose duty is to determine if a SAR mission is warranted.
- c) **Type** - A graded management system that is based on experience, training, and selection of a certified FC. This measurement correlates to the level of complexity a SAR mission has obtained.



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6) OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

a) Duties and Responsibilities:

- i) The duties of a Field Coordinator include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) Receiving a SAR mission from a State Police Mission Initiator (MI);
 - (2) Performing the duties of the Mission Initiator.
 - (3) Obtaining and coordinating the appropriate SAR resources for the operation of a SAR mission;
 - (4) Establishing an Incident Command Post;
 - (5) Directing, supervising, and managing responding SAR resources;
 - (6) Documenting the SAR mission;
 - (7) Providing documentation to the SAR Resource Officer within fifteen (15) days of mission termination or suspension;
 - (8) Ensuring SAR missions are operated safely by mitigation of risks to an acceptable level as determined by the Field Coordinator; and
 - (9) Being available for a week-long rotation of Incident Command duty or providing a substitute during that on-call week.
- ii) On-call is defined as being available to manage SAR missions. On-call Field Coordinators shall make every attempt to be on-scene to manage SAR missions, or have the capability to safely manage SAR missions while in route to establish the Incident Command Post.
- iii) Once a Field Coordinator accepts a mission, FC becomes an Incident Commander (IC) for the duration of the operational period.
- iv) Field Coordinators shall be authorized to manage SAR missions that have the same or lower mission type.
- v) Field Coordinators may manage SAR missions of a higher type only with the approval of the Area Commander.

b) Typing and Promotion of Field Coordinators:

- i) An individual seeking to become a New Mexico (NM) SAR Field Coordinator shall comply with the following:
 - (1) Submit an application to the Department of Public Safety (DPS);
 - (2) Obtain a positive recommendation from a Type III or higher Field Coordinator with whom the candidate has worked with on state SAR missions;
 - (3) Enrolling into the NMDPS Field Coordinator Trainee Program
 - (4) Complete the SAR management course required by NMDPS;



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- (5) Complete a qualifications review by the SAR Resource Officer;
- (6) Receive final approval for certification by the SAR Review Board and the New Mexico State Police Chief; and
- ii) Field Coordinators shall be typed. The typing of Field Coordinators shall be based on the level of experience the Field Coordinator possesses and must be approved by the SAR Resource Officer.
- iii) The Types of Field Coordinator are defined as:
 - (1) Type IV – Initial Response Incident Commander;
 - (2) Type III – Extended Response Incident Commander;
 - (3) Type II – Statewide Response Incident Commander; and
 - (4) Type I – Area Commander.
- iv) The qualifications of a Type IV Field Coordinator are:
 - (1) Must be certified as per the NM SAR Basic Field Certification Program;
 - (2) Must have successfully completed the NMIS ICS 100 and 200 courses;
 - (3) Must have successfully completed the NM SAR Operations Section Chief or the NM SAR Planning Section Chief course(s);
 - (4) Must have successfully completed the NM SAR Field Coordinator course;
 - (5) Must have participated in two (2) State SAR missions as an Operation and/or Planning Section Chief on at least one (1) operational period during the year prior to application;
 - (6) Must have documented management experience in Search and Rescue or other related field;
 - (7) Must be willing to manage local district SAR missions;
 - (8) Must be prepared to operate in the field for one (1) operational period;
 - (9) Must be willing to be mentored by another Type III or higher Field Coordinator;
 - (10) Must have all required components of the Basic Field Coordinator Kit (Attachment A) and all Required Mission Paperwork (Attachment B);
 - (11) Must have access to a cellular phone while on-call and during SAR missions; and
 - (12) Must have a hand-held radio with a high-gain antenna programmed to the New Mexico Search and Rescue frequencies and the state car-to-car frequency.
- v) The qualifications of a Type III Field Coordinator are:



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- (1) Must have successfully completed the Planning Section Chief and the Operations Section Chief courses;
 - (2) Must have completed eight (8) hours of Search and Rescue and/or Incident Command System training each year;
 - (3) Must be willing to manage local and adjacent districts' SAR missions;
 - (4) Must be prepared to stay in the field more than twelve (12) hours; and
 - (5) Must have the Type III equipment of the Basic Field Coordinator Kit.
- vi) For a Type IV Field Coordinator to be promoted to a Type III Field Coordinator, the following requirements must be attained:
- (1) Must have managed at least five (5) SAR missions, which can include one (1) state sanctioned training mission as an Incident Commander or Section Chief and have a minimum of two (2) years of duty as a Type IV Field Coordinator; and
 - (2) Must receive a positive recommendation from at least one (1) Area Commander.
- vii) The qualifications for a Type II Field Coordinator shall consist of:
- (1) Must have completed ALL Section Chief courses;
 - (2) Must have completed the Safety Officer course;
 - (3) Must have completed eight (8) hours of Search and Rescue and/or Incident Command System training per year;
 - (4) Must have completed the Air Operations Branch Director course;
 - (5) Must be willing to manage SAR missions anywhere in New Mexico;
 - (6) Must be prepared to stay in the field more than twenty-four (24) hours;
 - (7) Must have the Type II equipment of the Basic Field Coordinator Kit;
 - (8) Must own a mobile radio for both Search and Rescue and amateur frequencies; and
 - (9) Should have a 3-watt cell phone or cell phone amplifier with external antenna;
- viii) For a Type III FC to be promoted to a Type II Field Coordinator, the following requirements must be attained:
- (1) Must be recommended by two (2) or more Area Commanders; and
 - (2) Must have participated in at least ten (10) SAR missions, which can include state sanctioned training missions as an Incident Commander or Section Chief and have a minimum of two (2) years field experience as a Type III Field Coordinator.
- ix) The qualifications of a Type I Field Commander (Area Commander) are:



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- (1) Must have completed the Liaison and/or Public Information Officer course;
 - (2) Must have completed the NMIS ICS 700 course;
 - (3) Must have completed sixteen (16) hours of Search and Rescue and/or Incident Command System Training and/or instruction each year;
 - (4) Must be able to manage missions anywhere in New Mexico;
 - (5) Must be prepared to stay in the field for multiple operational periods;
 - (6) Must be available for week-long rotation of Area Commander's duty;
 - (7) Must attend at least half of the Area Commander meetings per year, whether in person or through conference calls;
 - (8) Must have all required Area Commander forms; and
 - (9) Must be able and willing to hold any Incident Command position on incidents other than Search and Rescue.
- x) For a Type II Field Coordinator to be promoted to a Type I Field Coordinator (Area Commander), the following requirements must be attained:
- (1) Must be recommended by all current Area Commanders;
 - (2) Must have participated in at least fifteen (15) SAR missions, which can include state sanctioned training missions as an Incident Commander or Section Chief and have a minimum of two (2) years field experience as a Type II Field Coordinator; and
 - (3) Must be willing to teach Search and Rescue and/or Incident Command System classes.
- xi) All promotions are subject to approval by the Resource Officer and the New Mexico State Police Chief.
- xii) Individual performances will be evaluated yearly using the following factors:
- (1) Availability
 - (2) Communication
 - (3) Competence
 - (4) Coordination of incident activities
 - (5) Delegation of authority
 - (6) Documentation
 - (7) General behavior on SAR missions
 - (8) Operational readiness
 - (9) Stress management



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- xiii) Any Field Coordinator missing two (2) Field Coordinator Rendezvous in a row will be removed from the roster.
- xiv) Dismissal or suspension of a Field Coordinator may result at any time from lack of compliance, inferior performance, or improper conduct as established by the Resource Officer.
 - (1) In the event that a Field Coordinator is found to be non-compliant to the standards, trainings, procedures or policies of DPS or performs inferior to the standard of care or displays improper conduct to the public, SAR responders, or other SAR and DPS personnel, the Resource Officer may establish and act as chairman of a panel of peers to review the allegation(s).
 - (2) The peer review panel or the SAR Resource Officer shall review the allegations. The review may include testimony of the Field Coordinator and/or witnesses, examination of written documentation or other evidence pertinent to the actions which lead to the review.
 - (3) The SAR Resource Officer may make recommendations for corrective actions, up to and including dismissal, to the Chief, via the Director of Special Operations.
- xv) Field Coordinators that are dismissed shall have the privilege to appeal the dismissal by submitting a request for a hearing with the Director of Special Operations within thirty (30) days of the dismissal. The Director of Special Operations may allow the Field Coordinator to provide evidence, either verbal or written, showing cause for retraction of the dismissal.
- xvi) Should a Field Coordinator take a leave of absence from Search and Rescue duty, the duration of that leave shall be no longer than one (1) year in order to be reinstated at the same type. If the duration is more than one (1) year, that Field Coordinator must participate in the Field Coordinator training and Field Coordinator Rendezvous during the first year after reinstatement if the above training is provided during that year. In the event that these requirements are not met, the said Field Coordinator shall be demoted to one (1) type down.
- xvii) The SAR Resource Officer/SAR Director may waive some or all requirements for Field Coordinator candidates or promotions of Field Coordinators.

7) ATTACHMENTS



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- a) Basic Field Coordinator Kit/Equipment List
- b) Required Mission Paperwork/ICS SAR Forms (provided in electronic format)

8) APPROVAL

APPROVED BY:  DATE: 2-24-26
DPS Cabinet Secretary

