

UPPER SAN JUAN SEARCH AND RESCUE, INC.

Guidelines and Protocols

Upper San Juan Search and Rescue, Inc. is a volunteer organization which operates as a 501c (3) and is an available resource to the Archuleta County Sheriff or his designee. All decisions regarding administration and operation of the team, including training is made by voting members of USJSAR and its Board of Directors.

USJSAR, Inc. operates throughout the year in a four-season, mountainous environment. Volunteers are therefore expected to maintain good physical condition and know when they are unable to perform because of sickness or other obligations. Know your limits. The main goal of this organization is to perform a successful search and safe rescue on each and every mission.

There is no 'glory' in mountain rescue. Although there may be great personal satisfaction, participation in a search, rescue or recovery involves long periods of waiting followed by long periods of very hard and disagreeable work. There is no member of USJSAR, Inc. above being assigned the most trivial job from 'babysitting' the vehicle on some back road to arranging for food and drink for those more actively involved in the mission. A successful mission depends as integrally upon the member monitoring the radio as it does upon the rescuer attending the patient. Whenever possible we stress the work of the group at the expense of the contribution of any single individual.

Searches, victim evacuations, technical rescues, rappelling and climbing are all strenuous activities with certain hazards. Each mission has its own unique conditions and must be evaluated by all members at the scene. Effective risk management comes from experience, proper training and good personal judgment. There is no place on a mission for over inflated egos that can endanger not only the patient but the entire team. It is each member's responsibility to obtain competent instruction, choose quality equipment and use adequate safety precautions.

It is the responsibility of each member to perform at the best of their ability and maintain a professional attitude. Alcohol or narcotic use during a mission is forbidden. If your ability is impaired when notified of a mission do not respond. Any violation of this policy will be cause for dismissal from the team.

Members of USJSAR, Inc. are expected to maintain a high level of moral standards. Any member who has been arrested for and/or convicted of offenses related to theft, domestic violence, child abuse, any crime of violence or any felony will be terminated.

As a volunteer member of USJSAR, Inc., medical coverage is provided for any injury that is incurred during the course of an authorized and supervised training mission. Members of the team are designated as 'statutory volunteers' under the County Workers' Compensation Pool. A Certificate of Participation is maintained at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). If you are injured during a mission, all claims are to be submitted and processed within four working days through the Sheriff's Office – starting with informing the Emergency Operations Director and USJSAR Board Secretary.

Volunteers may be called upon to use their own personal vehicles including snowmobiles and ATVs. Make sure your vehicle is properly maintained and that you have adequate snow tires and chains for winter conditions. Car pooling is recommended when possible to avoid congestion at a trail head or staging area.

Members must provide their own insurance coverage on personal vehicles. If your vehicle is used during a mission, please maintain a log of your mileage and related fuel purchases including receipts. Some missions are state funded which means that certain expenses are reimbursed. Your expenses incurred during those missions may be reimbursed at a later date. Please submit this information to the Emergency Operations Director within 5 working days of the mission.

Training is an integral part of your membership within USJSAR, Inc. All members are asked to participate in training programs. Volunteers are encouraged to obtain: Red Cross First Aid and current CPR certifications.

Members who will be doing field work need to maintain a suitable backpack containing spare clothes, survival gear, a minimal first aid kit, personal items and enough food and water for two days. See the suggested equipment list contained in this packet of information.

Mission notifications...occasionally you will be instructed to respond directly to the scene or staging area. Make sure you know the exact location. Drive safely and obey all traffic laws. SAR missions are rarely an emergency situation. Sign in upon arrival and wait for further instructions.

USJSAR, Inc. identification such as shirts, caps and/or ID cards should be worn at all times during a mission.

Members are allowed to carry personal firearms with them during a mission. Members who carry side arms are expected to be proficient in the use of their weapons. If the weapon is carried concealed, you must obtain a Colorado Concealed Weapon permit from the Archuleta County Sheriff's office.

Keep radio traffic to an absolute minimum and use clear text when reporting information. Unnecessary radio traffic drains batteries, disrupts the mission and can be a safety issue. Remember to use good judgment when giving patient personal information over the radio. Be direct concerning injuries. Please use code words when identifying a death. Radio traffic is monitored, possibly by the subjects' family as well as the public and news media. Again, use good judgment – when in doubt – ask another member their opinion.

Helicopters are sometimes used for patient evacuation, equipment and personal transportation. Working around helicopters is very dangerous. Members WILL NOT approach helicopters unless they have had helicopter familiarizing training. Qualified team members should approach helicopters only upon the command of the on scene team leader and/or helicopter flight staff.

All inquiries made by members of the subject's family and the news media will be referred immediately to the Emergency Operations Director or his designee. Members shall not give statements to the news media unless authorized by the mission commander. Members WILL NOT make death notifications under any circumstances. The Archuleta County Coroner or his designees are the only people who are authorized to make such notification.

When a mission is terminated, it is mandatory that you check in and sign out either at field command or the EOC. After a mission, please make notes about your activities for the upcoming mission debriefing. You should be notified as to the date and time of the debriefing.

These guidelines and protocols are subject to change by Upper San Juan Search and Rescue, Inc. Board of Directors. All members must read, sign and retain a copy of these guidelines.

Upon successful completion of your background check, your qualifications will be evaluated for physical fitness to participate in searches which take place in rough terrain, day or night, and in all types of weather. Mental qualifications involve the ability to cope with finding a critically injured or deceased victim.