



Montana Sheriffs & Peace Officers Association
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Search and Rescue Subcommittee

Quarterly Meeting

Date: Tuesday, April 7, 2026
Time: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
In-person: Fort Harrison, HAFRC, Room 113
Remote: Via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Introductions *Matt Boxmeyer (Chair); Steve Holton (Vice Chair); Nanette Gilbertson (MSPOA); Jake Ganieany (DES)*

Matt Boxmeyer, Chair, Gallatin County SO SAR
Jake Ganieany, DES
Stacy Bourquin, DES
Tam Kolar, DES
Capt. Harris Cannon, 40th HS
Jonas Bauer, 40th HS
Brandon Schneider, 40th HS
Michael White, 40th HS
Corey Hansen, Cascade County SAR
Ty Williams, Stillwater County SO SAR
Curtis Burleigh, Ravalli County SAR
Carol Field, Swan Mission SAR
Petrina DiOrio, Powell County SO SAR
Kim Triol, Powell County SO SAR
Brad Belke, Butte Silver Bow County – 1590 SAR
Tom Curtis, Lake County SAR
Gary Burke, Yellowstone County SAR
Duncan Hedges, Madison County SO SAR
Frank Pelli, Carbon County SAR
Darrin Wise, Flathead County SO SAR
Mike LaBaty, Park County SAR

Kent O'Donnell, Yellowstone County SO SAR
Chris Weiss, Lewis and Clark County SO SAR
Jason Jarrett, Gallatin County SO/MSPOA Mutual Aid
Nanette Gilbertson, MSPOA

Review and approve minutes from previous meeting (1-6-26)

Motion to approve the Search and Rescue Subcommittee meeting minutes from the 1-6-26 meeting as distributed via email (Curtis). Second (Hansen). Passed unanimous.

Old Business (Issues previously discussed which require follow-up)

➤ HJ 56 (Search and Rescue Study)

Update from Nanette on the last panel discussion. Nanette and Chair Boxmeyer presented to the Law and Justice Interim Committee to provide additional detail on the history of SAR funding, current state appropriation for SAR reimbursements, statutory requirements, the reimbursement process, overview of SFY26 reimbursement requests, and to answer questions from committee members. The committee asked how much additional funding would be needed in order to provide full funding for all SAR needs in the state. Nanette and Matt explained that due to not all SAR units submitting reimbursement requests for all mission, training, and equipment requests it is difficult to know the full cost of Search and Rescue costs in the state and the deficit between the state appropriation and the total cost for sheriffs' offices and SAR units in the state for mission, training, and equipment. Nanette also told committee members the SAR subcommittee would provide the results of the annual survey of SAR teams.

Nanette reported that the Law and Justice Interim Committee would likely not take action and bring forward a committee bill because they feel the SAR system is working.

New Business (Emerging issues which require attention from the SAR Subcommittee)

➤ Proposal to Implement Channel 3.0 on FRS/GMRS to Communicate w/ Public

Chair Boxmeyer and Darrin Wise explained the benefit of a statewide effort to utilize the 3.0 channel for communication with public in need of SAR resources.

WY has a similar program that has been successful.

Darrin explained that the channel 3 could be used with no additional sub-channels or a privacy code (.07) could be added. The drawback of utilizing the .07 privacy code is that many of the simple radios used by the public do not have the capability for privacy channels.

The subcommittee agreed that using channel 3 would be sufficient to communicate with the public.

In order to effectively utilize channel 3, there will need to be coordinated public outreach to both SAR teams and the general public. PSAs via social media and websites, information and a one-pager for outdoor recreation providers, like ski resorts, will inform the public that tuning to channel 3 in an emergency will give them the best chance of communication with SAR teams. One specific release for social media to provide to all teams for sake of consistency (make sure language is clear and has caveats, i.e. channel 3 is a recommendation and not a mandate).

Darrin and Nanette work on a standard release for social media to share with all SAR teams and SOs.

➤ CORE System Update – Resource Tracking and Management

Tam Kolar (DES)

Tam reported that DES is starting to roll out the CORE system to agencies and some local jurisdictions are already in the process of implementing.

The week of May 18, DES will host a resource round-up that will include a meeting in order to enter assets. The statewide asset list will be available during an incident when people need to assess what all is available and order resources. Local jurisdictions will be able to start adding their local resources as the goal is to have a comprehensive list of all state and local resources available in the state. CORE system will be able to assist with initial damage assessment.

*DES invited SAR teams to participate on May 19. **Nanette will plan to attend.***

Purpose is to have an inventory of all assets at the local and state level so everyone is aware of

SAR Financial Update

➤ Funds Balance (as of 4-1-26)

- HB2 authority (840H5) - \$200,154.00
- **Total SFY26 Authority REMAINING - \$129,016.27**
- **Cash Balance: \$230,070.98**

Nanette reported thus far the SAR subcommittee has approved just over \$73K in reimbursements for SFY26 which leaves \$129,016.27 for reimbursements for the remainder of the year. The subcommittee reimburses missions on a quarterly basis, but waits until the final meeting of the fiscal year to review and approve training and equipment requests. The remaining cash balance is \$230,070.98 which means that on an annual basis there will be about \$100k which rolls over. It is important to track the cash balance to ensure the fund does not grow too large. If the reimbursement requests continue to exceed the annual appropriation, it may be possible to request a larger appropriation from the legislature.

Training

➤ 2026/2027 SAR Trainings Needs

➤ Share upcoming training opportunities

- Basic SAR Course
Sponsored by Lake County SAR
Presented by ERI
Date: April 24-26, 2026
Location: Polson, MT
Duration: 3 Days (24 Hours)
See flyer for registration information

There are still 4 seats left in the class. If you want to attend, but seats are full, get your name on a waitlist.

- Basic SAR Course
Sponsored by Flathead County SAR
Presented by ERI
Date: May 1-3, 2026
Location: Flathead County
Reach out to Darrin Wise if you are interested in attending: dwise@flatheadcounty.gov

Resource List

- Updated Lists Provided via Email
 - Review and send updates to Chair Boxmeyer
 - **Send all updates BY MAY 5 so the subcommittee has current information for DES to upload to the CORE system.**

Reimbursement Requests

- SFY26 Training and Equipment Reimbursement Requests
 - 2026 Federal Mileage Rate = \$.725/mile
 - **CORRECTION: Submit by June 2, 2026**
- Reminders and Documentation
 - Include a roll-up and documentation for all costs to ensure SAR Chair does not have to manually add individual costs to verify reimbursement total
 - Vehicles are reimbursed at the federal mileage rate and require a mileage log (not fuel receipts)
 - Equipment is reimbursed for actual fuel costs and must include receipts
 - For training reimbursement requests, please include the total number of attendees in the narrative
 - Do not include sensitive criminal justice information details in the narrative
- Reimbursement Submission Deadlines
 - Submit Mission Reimbursement Requests within 90 days of the mission, when possible, to assist with record keeping, balance tracking, etc.
 - Submit training and equipment requests upon purchase of equipment or completion of training.

➤ Mission

→ Cascade County SO SAR

Date: 11/11/25

Total = \$418.32

Reimbursement Purpose = Mileage

Resources: 6 SAR members, Dirt Bikes, ATV'S, MAFB 40th Helicopter Squadron, 3 Deputies, Belt Ambulance

Narrative: On Nov. 11, 2025 CCSAR received a page out for 2 missing/overdue hunters. CCSAR arrived with dirt bikes, atv's and MAFB 40th helicopter squadron assisted with locating the individuals in the backcountry so that SAR teams could access the individuals and walk them out upon being medically cleared.

Resolution: Both individuals were found and cleared medically, suffering from only minor dehydration and aches and pains from hiking.

Motion to approve the Cascade County SAR Mission Reimbursement for \$418.32 with funding authorized by State DES (Belke). Second (Curtis). Passed unanimous.

→ **Cascade County SO SAR**

Date: 12/17&18/25

Total = \$153.30

Reimbursement Purpose = Mileage

Resources: 3 SAR members, Command Truck, Aerial Drone, Belt Ambulance, ALS, Mercy Flight, Monarch Fire Department, 2 Deputies

Narrative: On Dec. 17, 2025 CCSAR received a page out for 1 missing camper. CCSAR arrived with 3 members and 2 trucks and a thermal drone. The drone was deployed around the last point seen searching for heat signatures and a search team was dispatched to investigate the drone's findings. A later search of a 3-mile stretch of the road and at all creek crossings turned up the lost camper in the creek bed about 100 yards from the road. He appeared hypothermic and was warmed and monitored until transfer to Belt ambulance.

Resolution: Individual was found and transferred to Belt Ambulance for medical care and transport to hospital, suffering from hypothermia.

Motion to approve the Cascade County SAR Mission Reimbursement for \$153.30 with funding authorized by State DES (Belke). Second (Hedges). Passed unanimous.

→ **Missoula County SO SAR**

Date: 10/17&18/25

Total = \$7,769.99

Reimbursement Purpose = Equipment Replacement – Damaged Litter

Resources: Missoula County Sheriff's Office--two deputy SAR coordinators Missoula County Search and Rescue- thirteen volunteer members United States Forest Service- two sworn officers United States Air Force- one helicopter with crew Montana DNRC- two helicopters plus crew Powell County Sheriff's Office- two sworn law enforcement personnel Seeley Lake Fire personnel x 2.

Narrative: On 10/17/25, Missoula SAR assisted Powell County with a mutual aid request for a SAR mission. A fixed wing aircraft crashed in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The crash was located and all three souls including a K9 were deceased. Missoula SAR, Seeley Lake Fire, deputies from Missoula and Powell including a coroner were airlifted to the scene via two DNRC helicopters. The terrain was difficult and would have taken a considerable amount of time to reach via foot travel. Missoula SAR and Seeley Lake personnel brought along several pieces of safety, transport and extraction equipment. The deceased were extricated and removed from the scene. The helicopters did not have enough room to transport everyone back which included the deceased. Due to this, Missoula SAR had to leave gear behind. The gear was eventually recovered when the fixed wing was recovered by a private company. During the gear recovery, a Missoula SAR "litter" was damaged which can no longer be used for its intended purposes.

Resolution: Fixed wing aviation crash in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, resulting in three fatalities and a K9. The crash was located by the United States Air Force helicopter. Montana DNRC helicopters shuttled Missoula County and Powell County deputies along with Missoula County SAR members to the crash location. The deceased were extracted by above personnel and flown out by Montana DNRC. During the course of the mission, a rescue litter owned and purchased by Missoula SAR was damaged.

HOLD FOR Q4

→ **Powell County SO SAR**

Date: 10/17/25

Total = \$10,927.32

Reimbursement Purpose = Aircraft

Resources: DNRC Crews and aircraft were utilized in support of a fatal plane crash in northern Powell County

Narrative: DNRC firefighting crews and aircraft were utilized in support of a fatal plane crash in Northern Powell county on October 17, 2025. The crews were tasked with recovering the bodies on board the aircraft.

Resolution: Aircraft and crew were deployed. Bodies successfully recovered.

Motion to approve the Powell County SAR Mission Reimbursement for \$10,927.32 with funding authorized by State DES (Belke). Second (Hansen). Passed unanimous.

→ **Carbon County/Red Lodge SAR**

Date: 9/23/25

Total = \$15,250.00

Statutory Maximum = \$12,000.00

Reimbursement Purpose = Helicopter

Resources: Red Lodge SAR - 2 members US Water Rescue Dive Team - 6 members Central Copters Inc. - helicopter and 1 pilot

Narrative: Subject was attempting to cross Rimrock Lake at the outlet feeding East Rosebud Creek when he was swept into the creek and drowned. After about 3.5 months of searching of the immediate creek area, a successful search and recovery in the East Rosebud Creek/Rimrock Lake area was conducted by Red Lodge SAR members with assistance from the US Water Rescue Dive Team. Due to the distance from the trailhead and the extensive amount of equipment for the Dive Team, it was determined that transport via helicopter was the best course of action. Both Dive Team and drone searches were conducted. During a final drone flight, the subject was located, and Red Lodge SAR members and the Dive Team were able to recover the body, which was short-hauled to Red Lodge Airport.

Resolution: Deceased subject was short-hauled to Red Lodge Airport where it was received by Carbon County Coroner.

Motion to approve the Carbon County SAR Mission Reimbursement for \$12,000.00 with funding authorized by State DES (Hansen). Second (Hedges). Passed unanimous.

→ **Lincoln County/DT SAR**

Date: 3/1&2/26

Total = \$184.31

Reimbursement Purpose = Mileage

Resources: David Thompson Search and Rescue (2 trucks - CANAM Defender - 2 Ski Doo snowmobiles - 12 DTSAR members); 2 divers from Flathead Search and Rescue

Narrative: On 3/1/2026, family members called to report an ice fisherman missing. Family had located the missing person's vehicle at a trailhead and their snowmobile at Spar Lake. DTSAR members responded and the missing fisherman's gear was located in a hole in the ice. On 3/2/26, Divers from Flathead SAR responded the following day and recovered the missing fisherman from the lake.

Resolution: Missing fisherman recovered from the lake.

Motion to approve the Lincoln County SAR Mission Reimbursement for \$184.31 with funding authorized by State DES (Belke). Second (Hansen). Passed unanimous.

Open Comment/Public Comment

Darrin Wise reported Two Bear Air is scheduled to be back on line by May 1 and that resource will be available again.

Major Brandon Schneider let the SAR subcommittee members that the 40th has a new helicopter and additional capabilities. As the Huey aircraft are phased out and the 139 helicopters are phased in, the 40th will have more availability to assist across the state (with approval from AFRCG). Will likely always come with medically trained personnel on board. Will also have additional survival gear and drop bags that will be pre-loaded that can be dropped if they are unable to reach a person. Also available to have an open house type mission brief with the helicopter so SAR teams know what is available when requesting the 40th. The 40th can request approval to train with local SAR teams and agencies once the new helicopters are fully on-line. If you would like to train with the 40th, contact Major Brandon Schneider, Assistant Director of Operations 40th HS (brandon.schneider.1@us.af.mil).

Tom Curtis asked if the 40th has a policy on the new regulations regarding drone operations on fires and other incidents and what type of coordination is required when a 40th helicopter is in the air. Notification is necessary. DROTAMS is a system the FAA uses which can notify pilots that there is a drone in the air. Communication with the crew to let them know there is a drone operating in the area is critical.

Curtis Burleigh requested the 40th resource pamphlet be emailed to the entire SAR subcommittee distribution list.

Next Meetings

➤ June 9, 2026

State Fiscal Year 2026 Training and Equipment Reimbursement Requests

Requests can be submitted throughout the year, but will be evaluated and voted on at the last meeting of the state fiscal year.

1st Quarter Reimbursement Requests

- **Training**
None
- **Equipment**
None

2nd Quarter Reimbursement Requests

- **Training**
 - ➔ Carbon County SAR
September 2025
Total = \$14,223.40
Training Type: *Wilderness First Responder*
Description: *NOLS Hybrid Wilderness First Responder (WFR) includes an online component in addition to the traditional scenarios and skills. Upon completion, you will be able to conduct a thorough physical exam, obtain a patient history, assess vital signs, provide emergency care in the wilderness, and make crucial evacuation decisions. NOLS Wilderness Medicine's nationally recognized curriculum encompasses a wide range of topics including long-term patient care, wound management, selective spine immobilization, reducing dislocations, litter packaging, and epinephrine administration. Successful course completion will earn the following NOLS Wilderness Medicine certifications:*
 - *Wilderness First Responder*
 - *Adult, Child, and Infant CPR & Airway Management*
 - *Epinephrine Auto-injector***Training Provided By:** *Headwaters Field Medicine*
 - ➔ Powell County SAR
August 2025 – December 2025
Total = \$565.00
Training Type: *K9 Training*
Description: *2 k9 SAR teams training. The training occurred weekly from August through December.*
Training Provided By: *Canine Training Group*

Total Training Reimbursement Request for Q2:

\$14,788.40

➤ **Equipment**

→ Powell County SAR

Equipment: Training Shirts

Uniformity & Identification Matching t shirts create a consistent, professional appearance that helps the public, partner agencies, & team members quickly identify SAR personnel during missions, training, & community events.

Comfort & Functionality Short sleeve shirts are lightweight & breathable, making them ideal for strenuous outdoor activities in warm weather allowing for ease of movement during rescues, searches, & extended deployments.

Durability & Safety High quality shirts withstand rugged conditions, repeated washing, & exposure to the elements. Bright colors can also improve visibility, enhancing safety during operations.

Community Engagement & Branding Branded apparel reinforces our team's identity & credibility when interacting with the public, & partner organizations. It strengthens community trust & promotes awareness of our mission.

Cost Effectiveness Investing in durable, standardized shirts reduces the need for frequent replacements & ensures long term savings.

Date Purchased: August 11, 2025

Total Cost: \$501.44

Local Match: \$175.50

Requested Amount: \$325.94

→ Powell County SAR

Equipment: SAR Unit Long Sleeve Shirts

Protection & Safety: Long sleeves shield team members from sun exposure, abrasions, insect bites, & harsh weather conditions, reducing risk during missions in rugged environments.

Comfort & Functionality: The shirts balance warmth & ventilation, for comfort in variable climates & allowing full mobility during strenuous activities.

Uniformity & Identification: Standardized apparel creates a consistent, professional appearance that helps the public & partner agencies quickly recognize SAR personnel in the field.

Durability: High-quality materials withstand repeated washing & heavy use, making them a cost-effective investment for long-term team needs.

Community Engagement & Branding: Branded shirts reinforce our team's identity, build public trust, & promote awareness of our mission during training, & fundraising activities. This purchase will strengthen our team's safety, professional image, & operational effectiveness while ensuring cost-efficient use of resources.

Date Purchased: October 6, 2025

Total Cost: \$1,655.91

Local Match: \$579.57

Requested Amount: \$1,076.30

→ Lake County SAR

Equipment: Transport Bed

This transport bed is designed to fit our Polaris Ranger and allows for the safe movement of patients in remote areas. It supports either a backboard or a Stokes litter and provides a secure, seated position for a medical attendant. Many locations within our jurisdiction are inaccessible to larger emergency vehicles, limiting our ability to bring an ambulance directly to the patient. These areas are commonly reached by ATVs or other 4-wheel-drive vehicles, and in the past we have had to transport patients either seated or unsecured in the rear of a UTV. This system will greatly improve safety and patient care during transport.

Date Purchased: October 29, 2025

Total Cost: \$4,595.00

Local Match: \$1,608.25

Requested Amount: \$2,986.75

→ Lake County SAR

Equipment: Personal Flotation Devices

This request is for seven personal flotation devices (PFDs) and a foot pump for use with our rigid-hull rescue boat. The vessel responds to emergencies and search operations on Flathead Lake, one of the largest and most volatile lakes in Montana. Ensuring that our rescuers are properly trained and equipped is essential for conducting safe and effective operations in these challenging conditions.

Date Purchased: September 22, 2025

Total Cost: \$493.65

Local Match: \$172.78

Requested Amount: \$320.87

→ Lake County SAR

Equipment: Stokes Litter

This purchase request is for a Stokes litter. A Stokes litter basket is used for safely transporting injured or immobilized patients over rough terrain or in technical rescue situations. The patient is securely strapped into the basket, often with a backboard for spinal immobilization, and can then be carried, lowered, or hauled by hand or rope systems. The basket is deep to contain the patient and prevent them from falling out during vertical lifts or on uneven ground.

Date Purchased: August 14, 2025

Total Cost: \$1,569.00

Local Match: \$549.15

Requested Amount: \$1,019.85

→ Lake County SAR

Equipment: Compact Aerial Drone

This request is for a compact aerial drone to enhance search capabilities and support training in remote trail environments. Our current primary drone, operated by Polson Rural Fire Department, is too large to deploy in many backcountry locations. A smaller drone with identical control functions will allow field teams to conduct rapid aerial assessments, improve search efficiency, and increase responder safety in areas inaccessible to larger equipment.

Date Purchased: September 16, 2025

Total Cost: \$549.00

Local Match: \$183.15

Requested Amount: \$356.85

→ Powell County SAR

Equipment: Reflective Hats

Bright orange reflective hats are essential high-visibility safety gear for Search and Rescue personnel. The fluorescent color and reflective striping increase visibility during daylight operations, low-light missions, and adverse weather. These hats help team members identify one another quickly in dense terrain and improve visibility to aircraft, ground teams, and subjects. They will be used during trainings, callouts, and community events to enhance safety, team recognition, and operational effectiveness.

Date Purchased: November 17, 2025

Total Cost: \$1,094.00

Local Match: \$382.90

Requested Amount: \$711.10

Total Equipment Reimbursement Requests for Q2:

\$6,797.66

3rd Quarter Reimbursement Requests

➤ Training

→ Lake County SAR

October 25, 2025

Total = \$3,750.00

Training Type: *Wilderness First Aid Medical Training*

Description: *Hands-on, research-based training for remote medical emergencies, focusing on practical skills like patient assessment, splinting, wound care anaphylaxis and injury management preparing professionals and adventurers for situations where professional help is far away.*

Training Provided By: *Longleaf Wilderness Medicine*

Total Training Reimbursement Requests for Q3:

\$3,750.00

➤ **Equipment**

→ Powell County SAR

Equipment: Mobile Radios

We've added two new mobile radios to our fleet and upgraded several of our existing units with new parts. These improvements strengthen our communication capabilities during searches and trainings as we continue serving our neighbors across Powell County, MT.

Reliable communication saves time—and time saves lives. We're grateful for the support that helps us stay mission-ready.

Date Purchased: August 11, 2025

Total Cost: \$1,141.93

Local Match: \$399.68

Requested Amount: \$742.25

Total Equipment Reimbursement Requests for Q3:

\$742.25