



Position Statement Billing for Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations

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The search for, or rescue of, someone in peril is among the most humanitarian of acts. It is recognized that, to the extent possible, individuals and communities have a moral obligation to aid those in danger, regardless of any legal obligation.

NASAR recognizes the ultimate decision to bill a survivor for SAR operations, or a victim's family for attempts to save their family member's life, is that of the local authority responsible for SAR. However, lifesaving action must take precedence and political, economic, jurisdictional or other such factors must remain secondary when dealing with lifesaving matters. Authorities with responsibility for SAR and SAR organizations can not allow cost reimbursement to delay response to any person in danger or distress.

A perceived or actual belief that the subject of a SAR mission will be billed for the lifesaving actions undertaken on their behalf must not delay or interfere with a timely call for help. Such delays can, at the minimum, cause further danger to the person in peril and, at the maximum, place their life in jeopardy. Delays can place SAR personnel in extreme danger and unnecessarily compound and extend the length of the SAR mission. Because of these factors, and to eliminate the fear of being unable to pay for having one's life saved, SAR services should be rendered to persons in danger or distress without subsequent cost-recovery from the person(s) assisted unless prior arrangements have been made.

The mission of SAR organizations is to save lives, not just the lives of those who can afford to pay the bill. As such, methods and means should be developed and used that diffuse the cost of humanitarian SAR operations among the many, allowing anyone to reasonably expect emergency aid without regard to their circumstances.

Founded in 1973, the National Association for Search and Rescue comprises more than 10,000 volunteer and paid search and rescue professionals who work at the local, state and national level in land, aviation and water SAR. NASAR conducts hundreds of training courses and thousands of certification exams each year. More than 11,000 people hold any of 11 NASAR certifications in SAR operations.

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