

Article 6.

North Carolina Search and Rescue.

§ 166A-65. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Contract response team. – A search and rescue team, specialty rescue team, or incident support team.
- (2) Incident support team. – A team of trained emergency response personnel, organized to provide coordination between governmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations as well as technical and logistical support to search and rescue teams and specialty rescue teams.
- (2a) Search and rescue team. – A specialized team or group of teams, organized with capabilities equivalent to search and rescue teams established under the Federal Emergency Management Agency in order to assist in the removal of trapped victims during emergencies, including, but not limited to, collapsed structures, trench excavations, elevated locations, and other technical rescue situations.
- (3) Secretary. – The Secretary of the Department of Public Safety.
- (4) Specialty rescue team. – A specialized response team, organized to provide technical rescue assistance to first responders. The term includes, but is not limited to, a canine search and rescue or disaster response team, a cave search and rescue team, a collapse search and rescue team, a mine and tunnel search and rescue team, and a swift water or flood search and rescue team. A specialty rescue team shall be aligned with one or more of the search and rescue categories within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's national resource typing system.
- (5) Repealed by Session Laws 2017-57, s. 16E.2, effective July 1, 2017. (2014-27, s. 4; 2017-57, s. 16E.2; 2017-170, s. 1.)

§ 166A-66. North Carolina Search and Rescue Program.

(a) The Secretary shall adopt rules establishing a program for search and rescue that relies on contracts, memorandums of understanding, and memorandums of agreement with contract response teams. The program shall be administered by the Division of Emergency Management. To the extent possible, the program shall be coordinated with other emergency planning activities of the State. The program shall include contract response teams located strategically across the State that are available to provide 24-hour dispatch from the Division of Emergency Management Operations Center. The rules for the program shall include:

- (1) Standards, including training, equipment, and personnel standards required to operate a contract response team.
- (2) Guidelines for the dispatch of a contract response team to a search and rescue team or specialty rescue team mission.
- (3) Guidelines for the on-site operations of a contract response team.
- (4) Standards for administration of a contract response team, including procedures for reimbursement of response costs.
- (5) Refresher and specialist training for members of contract response teams.
- (6) Procedures for recovering the costs of a search and rescue team or specialty rescue team mission.

- (7) Procedures for bidding and contracting for search and rescue team and specialty rescue team missions.
- (8) Criteria for evaluating bids for search and rescue team and specialty rescue team missions.
- (9) Delineation of the roles of the contract response team, local public safety personnel, the Division of Emergency Management's area coordinator, and other State agency personnel participating in a search and rescue team or specialty rescue team mission.
- (10) Procedures for the Division of Emergency Management to audit the contract response teams to ensure compliance with State and federal guidelines.

(b) Within available appropriations, the Division of Emergency Management shall spend the necessary funds for training, equipment, and other items necessary to support the operations of contract response teams. The Division of Emergency Management may also administer any grants of other funds made available for contract response teams, in accordance with applicable rules and regulations approved by the Director of the State Budget.

(c) In developing the North Carolina Search and Rescue Program and adopting the rules required by this section, the Secretary shall consult with the North Carolina Search and Rescue Team Advisory Committee established pursuant to G.S. 166A-69. (2014-27, s. 4; 2017-57, s. 16E.2; 2017-170, s. 1.)

§ 166A-67. Contracts; equipment loans.

(a) The Secretary may contract with any unit or units of local government for the provision of a contract response team to implement the North Carolina Search and Rescue Program. Contracts are to be let consistent with the bidding and contract standards and procedures adopted pursuant to G.S. 166A-66(a)(7) and G.S. 166A-66(a)(8). In entering into contracts with units of local government, the Secretary may agree to provide any of the following:

- (1) A loan of equipment.
- (2) Reimbursement of personnel costs, including the cost of callback personnel, when a contract response team is authorized by the Department to respond to search and rescue team and specialty rescue team missions.
- (3) Reimbursement for use of equipment and vehicles owned by the contract response team.
- (4) Replacement of disposable materials and damaged equipment.
- (5) Training expenses.
- (6) Anything else agreed to by the Secretary and the contract response team.

(b) The Secretary shall not agree to provide reimbursement for standby time.

(c) Any contract entered into between the Secretary and a unit of local government for the provision of a contract response team shall specify that the members of the contract response team, when performing under the contract, shall not be employees of the State and shall not be entitled to benefits under the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System or for the payment by the State of federal Social Security, employment insurance, or workers' compensation.

(d) Contract response teams that have the use of a State vehicle may use the vehicle for local purposes. Where a State vehicle is used for purposes other than authorized contract response to a search and rescue team and specialty rescue team mission, the contract response team shall be liable for repairs or replacements directly attributable to that use. (2014-27, s. 4; 2017-57, s. 16E.2; 2017-170, s. 1.)

§ 166A-68. Immunity of contract response team personnel.

Members of a contract response team shall be protected from liability under the provisions of G.S. 166A-19.60(a) while on a search and rescue team or specialty rescue team mission pursuant to authorization from the Division of Emergency Management. (2014-27, s. 4; 2017-57, s. 16E.2; 2017-170, s. 1.)

§ 166A-69. North Carolina Search and Rescue Team Advisory Committee.

(a) The North Carolina Search and Rescue Team Advisory Committee is created. The Secretary shall appoint the members of the Committee and shall designate the Director of the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management or the Director's designee as the chair. In making appointments, the Secretary shall take into consideration the expertise of the appointees in the management of search and rescue or specialty response team missions. The Secretary shall appoint one representative from each of the following:

- (1) The Division of North Carolina Emergency Management, who shall be the Director of the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management or the Director's designee and who shall serve as the chair.
- (2) Each state regional contract response team's Chief or Deputy Chief.
- (3) The North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal.
- (4) The North Carolina Highway Patrol.
- (5) The North Carolina National Guard.
- (6) The North Carolina Association of Rescue and E.M.S., Inc.
- (7) The North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs.
- (8) The North Carolina State Firefighters' Association.
- (9) The North Carolina Emergency Management Association.
- (10) A program representative from each of the following specialty rescue programs:
 - a. Helicopter rescue.
 - b. Swiftwater rescue.
 - c. Mountain rescue.
 - d. Wilderness search and rescue.

(b) The Advisory Committee shall meet on the call of the chair, or at the request of the Secretary, provided that the Committee shall meet no less than once every year. The Department of Public Safety shall provide space for the Advisory Committee to meet. The Department shall also provide the Advisory Committee with necessary support staff and supplies to enable the Committee to carry out its duties in an effective manner.

(c) Members of the Advisory Committee shall serve without pay, but shall receive travel allowance, lodging, subsistence, and per diem as provided by G.S. 138-5.

(d) The Contract Response Team Advisory Committee shall advise the Secretary on the establishment of the North Carolina Search and Rescue Program. The Committee shall also evaluate and advise the Secretary of the need for additional contract response teams to serve the State. (2014-27, s. 4; 2016-51, s. 6; 2017-57, s. 16E.2; 2017-170, s. 1; 2023-92, s. 6.)