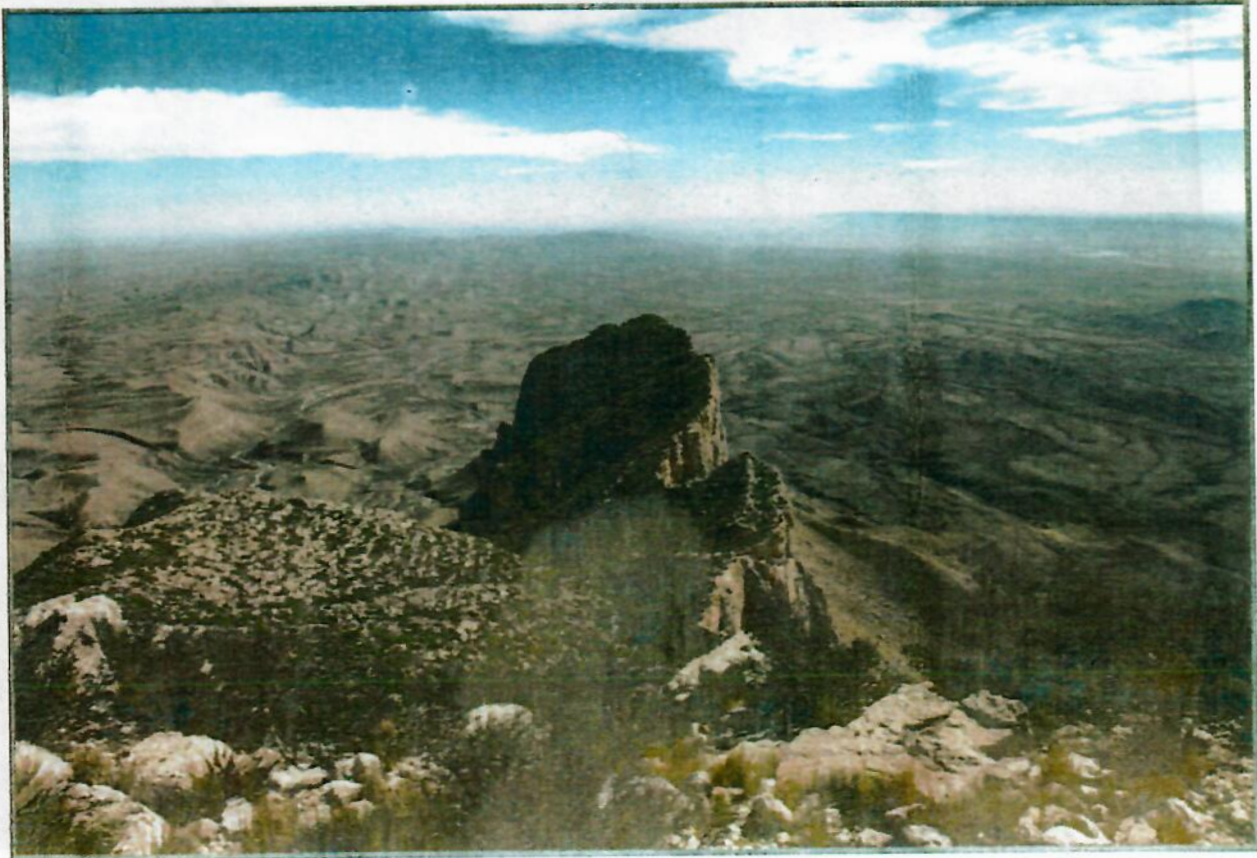


# Guadalupe Mountains National Park

DIVISION OF VISITOR AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

SAR PLAN

April 16, 2020



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04/16/20

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## **Introduction**

Guadalupe Mountains National Park (GUMO) provides protection and emergency services to an average of 174,635 (2007-2017) visitors annually. GUMO encompasses 86,367 acres, 46,850 acres of which are wilderness. Elevations range from 3,632 feet (Gypsum Sand Dunes) to 8,749 feet (Guadalupe Peak).

Overall SAR activity in GUMO is varied due to terrain, weather, remoteness, and location. GUMO SAR personnel respond to an average of 12 SAR incidents annually (2016-2018), with the majority being on Guadalupe Peak Trail.

Park visitors are expected to be self-reliant and assume a high degree of personal preparedness and responsibility while recreating in the backcountry and wilderness setting. Safety and preparedness information is available through various sources (PSAR, trailhead signs, printed materials, staffed information station, park website, etc.) Park visitors are ultimately responsible for their own actions and consequences.

Responders will be appropriately trained for the assigned task.

Personnel will meet national training standards involving EMS provider levels, helicopter qualifications, as well as specialized rescue techniques/equipment. SAR personnel should not be given or accept assignments that exceed their own personal abilities and/or training.

## **Policy and Authority**

The National Park Service (NPS) has traditionally provided resource management and visitor protection services including search and rescue operations within areas administered by the NPS. The provision of these services is in accordance with the NPS Organic Act of August 25, 1916 (54 USC). The NPS will make reasonable efforts to provide for appropriate SAR operations for persons lost, injured or in need of rescue.

The NPS program and written policy for search and rescue is Director's Order #59 (Search and Rescue) (DO59)). This document, in addition to NPS Reference Manual 59 (RM-59) and the NPS Search and Rescue Field Manual establish and define standards and procedures for the NPS SAR Program. DO59 and RM59 further establish training requirements for SAR personnel positions. Per Emergency Support Function #9, the Department of the Interior (DOI), as a signatory agency, is considered a formal participant in the National SAR Plan of the United

States with provides for the use of outside agencies to be deployed on SAR incidents managed by the NPS.

### NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Reference:

*“The saving of human life will take precedence over all other management actions”*

-NPS Management Policies, Visitor Safety, Section 8.2.5.1

*The National Park Service will develop a program of emergency preparedness... The purpose of the program will be to provide for visitor and employee safety and the protection of resources and property to the extent possible.”*

-NPS Management Policies, Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Operations, Section 8.2.5.2

*“To provide for the protection and safety of park visitors, the Service will make reasonable efforts to search for lost persons and rescue sick, injured, or stranded persons.\_*

-NPS Management Policies, Search and Rescue, Section 8.2.5.3

### SAR As a Discretionary Funtion

Although authority is granted to the National Park Service, there is no legal mandate to conduct search and rescue. Search and Rescue on the part of the National Park Service is viewed as being a discretionary function of the agency.

GUMO SAR personnel may respond to those who are determined to be unjustifiably overdue, in need of medical or physical assistance, downed aircraft, boaters in trouble, or any type of situation in which assistance is required from those responsible for the safety of people.

See appendix: *Hugh B. Johnson v. United States*

### Program Management Roles

**The Superintendent** responsible for all park operations. Through the Superintendent, full authority for SAR program implementation has been delegated to the Chief Ranger. SAR operations are a primary responsibility of the Visitor and Resource Protection Division.

**The Chief Ranger** ensures that SAR program needs are met through staffing, funding,

delegation of responsibility, and oversight. He/she coordinates with other divisions to promote cooperation, resource sharing, and incident support as needed.

**The Emergency Services Coordinator** is responsible for overseeing all facets of emergency management, preparedness and response within the park. The Emergency Services Coordinator will coordinate with the SAR Coordinator to provide annual training to all GUMO SAR personnel.

**The SAR Coordinator** has park-wide responsibility for search and rescue which includes ensuring that the GUMO SAR program is in compliance with service-wide policy, regulation and all applicable laws. The SAR Coordinator will also maintain a list of call-out resources.

**SAR Personnel** are responsible for their personal fitness and preparedness. SAR Personnel are responsible for informing the IC of any restriction or hindrance to their performance on a SAR including but not limited to: injury, fatigue, level of fitness, level of preparation, medical issues, consumption of medication, or consumption of alcohol.

### **Level of SAR Provided at Guadalupe Mountains National Park**

As established by the National Incident Management System (NIMS), all GUMO SAR incidents will be managed using the incident command system (ICS). ICS provides numerical typing for incidents based on the complexity and duration of an operation. GUMO is able to respond to type 5, 4, and 3. See appendix for full incident typing.

**TYPE 5 (Initial Attack)** - Incident can involve several personnel. The incident is contained within the first operational period and often within a few hours.

**TYPE 4 (Initial Attack)** - Incident involves several resources and personnel. The incident is usually limited to one operational period in the control phase. No written Incident Action Plan (IAP) is required.

**TYPE 3 (Extended Attack)** - As incident develops, initial attack capabilities are exceeded. Appropriate ICS positions are activated based on the complexity of the incident. The incident may extend into multiple operational periods and a written IAP is prepared.

### **Program Objectives**

**Operational Objectives** of the GUMO Search and Rescue Program are as follows:

- 1) Prevention – Educate the public on personal preparedness and personal safety.

- Stationary and roving PSAR. Engineering trails to visitor use and safety standards.
- 2) Pre-Response – Maintain SAR Caches and SAR personnel to meet demands.
  - 3) Response – Conduct safe, effective and efficient SAR operations.
  - 4) Post Response – Complete timely debriefs to analyze SAR operations. Restock and rehab equipment.
  - 5) Prevention: Educate the public on personal preparedness and personal safety. Encourage the visiting public to be prepared for current and expected weather conditions, physical demands, and not to exceed their personal abilities. Use of printed materials to make the public conscious of their own safety and to promote safety awareness. Coordinate with GUMO Trail Crew Supervisor and Park Management to ensure any potential trail hazards are addressed in a timely manner.
  - 6) Pre-Response: Develop a professional SAR organization that can effectively/efficiently respond to various SAR incidents and conduct operations in a safe manner. Properly train SAR personnel and ensure they have the necessary equipment/gear to accomplish the mission. Maintain SAR Cache(s) in a readiness state at all times for a quick response.
  - 7) Response: Give proper briefing to SAR team. This can be quick and simple without delaying response. Deploy the appropriate trained and qualified SAR personnel to conduct an efficient, effective and safe SAR operation. Deliver subject(s) to a safe environment and continue assistance as necessary. Ensure only minimal impacts occur to the parks natural, cultural, and historical resources.

### **Incident Documentation**

All SAR incidents require the National Park Service Search and Rescue Report (NPSSAR Report) (Version 2.2) to be completed along with a Case Incident Report in IMARS. Additionally, all documentation related to the incident will accompany the SAR report packet. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Incident Action Plan Check-in List
- Photographs/Video General Message
- Incident Maps Unit Logs
- Demobilization Checkout Forms
- Lost Person Questionnaire
- Search Urgency Rating

*See appendix for examples of possible forms*

**For incident reporting purposes** at GUMO, examples of SAR incidents include:

- All major SAR incidents. SAR operations that exceed \$500 in un-programmed expenses
- A response to any area of the park in order to provided medical or physical rescue

assistance

- Missing/separated parties where initial actions, including lengthy efforts and numerous personnel, are initiated
- Any helicopter medevac, regardless of location
- Any litter carryout
- Any technical rescue
- Any fatality recovery operation or recovery of property, regardless of location
- Unfounded or false reports of potential search and rescue incidents that involve a significant response or investigative actions being initiated
- Standby for potential SAR incidents involving a significant response level
- Any ELT (Emergency Locations Transmitter) or PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) alerts
- Any forced landing, air crash, or downed aircraft incident
- Any assistance to an outside agency or NPS unit in support of a search and rescue incident

### **Notification Procedures**

**Notification requirements** for GUMO SAR incidents are as follows in appropriate order:

- Supervisor
- Chief Ranger
- Superintendent
- Public Information Officer

**Minor incidents** or unfounded incidents do not need notification. Any incident involving injury to a park employee or a park visitor requires immediate notification. By making the initial notification to whoever is available, notification will go up the chain of command as appropriate.

**The NPS Emergency Incident Coordination Center (EICC)** has established two levels of incidents based on reporting requirements:

- 1) **High Priority Incidents (Level 1)** – Report immediately and complete a follow-up report within three days
  - 1.1. Employee fatalities, life threatening injuries, or injuries requiring hospitalization
  - 1.2. Significant law enforcement incidents
  - 1.3. Disasters
  - 1.4. Aircraft accidents

- 2) **Normal Priority Incidents (Level 2)** – Report within three working days
  - 2.1 Search and Rescue: Major searches and/or rescues, generally defined as any SAR that requires a significant call-out of resources or that is prolonged or difficult.
  - 2.2 The IC, Supervisor, and/or Chief Ranger will be the individual contacting the EICC at 1-540-999-3412

### **Training Standards**

**Required Training:** All GUMO SAR Personnel will have completed:

- GUMO Specific Radio Training
- GUMO Specific Basic SAR Training
- GUMO Backcountry Training

**Recommended Training:** All GUMO VRP employees with collateral SAR duties will have completed:

- ICS 100: Introduction to Incident Command System
- ICS 200 Basic Incident Command System.

### **Other Training Opportunities**

- ICS 300: Intermediate Incident Command System
- ICS 400: Advanced Incident Command System
- ICS 700: NIMS; An Introduction
- ICS 800: NIMS; National Response Framework
- A100: DOI Basic Helicopter/Airplane Safety
- M3: Aviation Management Training for Supervisors
- MLPI: Managing the Lost Person Incident
- NPS Basic SAR: On-line SAR Modules and 8hr classroom
- G290 – Basic Public Information Officer

### **Search and Rescue Resource Parameters**

All GUMO VRP Rangers are collateral duty SAR Personnel. The number of VRP Rangers employed at GUMO and the number of Rangers available at the park may vary. All VRP Rangers are trained to the standards in section 8.1 and 8.2. VRP Rangers are trained as EMTs or First Responders.

Other GUMO employees and volunteers may fill various SAR duties as requested and training allows.

GUMO has fully stocked ambulance (Rescue 1) and a light rescue truck (Rescue 2). GUMO also has a wheeled litter, Hasty Response SAR bags, EMS bags, and various and common rescue

equipment.

**SAR Personnel:** Every effort will be made to deploy trained and qualified personnel during SAR responses. During a multi-operational period incident (Type 3 or greater), it is preferable to maintain continuity of key positions such as overhead personnel, section chiefs, and primary investigators.

While personnel within the Division of Visitor and Resource Protection are directly responsible for implementation of the SAR Plan, resources from other divisions may be asked to respond to incidents. Park personnel being requested to assist with a SAR incident are directly responsible for obtaining supervisory approval. The SAR Coordinator is responsible for maintaining a list of responders and call-out resources. Once assigned, individuals are committed to the incident for the duration of the incident, until released by the Incident Commander or their designee.

Personal Fitness – SAR operations are conducted outside in an ever changing environment. SAR personnel must be physically and mentally fit to perform in an effective and safe manner. Proper diet, sleep, and exercise must be maintained to achieve optimal performance.

Personal Preparedness – SAR personnel must be prepared for all situations that could arise during a SAR operation.

### **Mutual Aid Requests by Outside Agencies**

GUMO SAR personnel are sometimes requested to assist surrounding agencies with SAR operations. *Refer appendix for interagency agreements*

Every effort will be made to deploy trained and qualified personnel during mutual aid SAR responses. Personnel will meet national training standards involving EMS provider levels. Untrained able-bodied NPS personnel may be assigned to supporting roles (non-supervisory) such as logistics, confinement, haul team member and litter team positions. SAR personnel should not be given or accept assignments that exceed their own personal abilities

SAR personnel responding outside park boundaries at the request of an outside agency will be acting within the scope of their NPS employment. All NPS policies, procedures and safety requirements will be adhered to. If duties asked of NPS SAR personnel are not compliant with NPS policies, procedures, or safety requirements, NPS SAR personnel will decline the task. NPS SAR personnel will not accept a task that they are not properly trained, skilled, or certified to do. This includes operation of any ATV, UTV, RUV, boat, motor vehicle, etc.

**Mutual Aid Request by GUMO:** Given staffing, a specific skill set/function, and/or multiple incidents occurring simultaneously, IC's managing a park incident at any time can request mutual aid from outside agencies. GUMO will request mutual aid per NPS protocol. *See appendix: Mutual Aid Agreements*



## **Quality Improvement**

**After Action Review (AAR)**'s will be completed immediately after each SAR operation. An AAR may also be completed anytime at the discretion of the Incident Commander. The IC or their designee will conduct the AAR. All SAR personnel involved in the incident are required to attend unless the IC specifically releases them. Use the IRPG AAR Overview as a template for conducting an AAR. *See appendix: IRPG AAR Overview. See RM-55 Chapter 7.*

**SAR Reports** and IMARS reports will be written by the Incident Commander or their designee. For Minor SARs, the SAR Coordinator will review the SAR report. The SAR Coordinator and the Emergency Services Coordinator will review major SAR reports. In the event that the SAR Coordinator is the IC, their supervisor will review the SAR Report.

The author will rectify any corrections found in the SAR report prior to approval.

**SAR Incidents** will be documented in IMARS using the IMARS NPS SAR reporting form and linked to the appropriate NP number. A separate copy of the SAR Reporting form will be saved in on the GUMO network [Protection Drive> Program Management> EMS-SAR> YYYY SAR Reports]. SAR Reports will be saved in the following format: [MM.DD.YYYY SUBJLASTNAME SAR].

**The Freedom of Information Act** must be balanced with the Privacy Act, HIPPA, and other applicable laws. The SAR Report and Case Incident Report are subject to confidentiality laws. *See RM-59 Chapter 20.*

**Substandard Performance** will be addressed by incident supervisors at the appropriate time. Performance that does not comply with established standards of care or statewide or NPS policies will prompt immediate action including an investigation and appropriate remedial measures.

DO-59 and RM-59 provide guidance on conducting a Board of Inquiry for incidents of significant consequence. *See RM-59 Chapter 19.*

## **Communications**

**Park Dispatch** will use the OPS and FRIJOLE channels. 725V (Visitor Center) serves as Park Dispatch.

The Incident Commander may establish a Communications Chief per ICS protocol. The Communications Chief will serve as dispatch for the incident until relieved of duty by the IC.

During a SAR, the Incident Commander or Communications Section Chief may reserve OPS or FRIJOLE for emergency traffic only. Any member of the SAR Team may request an emergency traffic status through their supervisor.

**Tactical Channels** such as TXLAW or LE-TAC may be used as line of sight communication between SAR personnel.

**Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)** is not an emergency services dispatch center, and as such is not an appropriate dispatch to use during a SAR.

### **Critical Incident Stress Management**

**CISM** is a multi-component crisis intervention program. It is available to anyone who has been involved in any critical or stressful emergency incident at GUMO. Within 36 hours following an incident involving traumatic or stressful situations, park managers will provide for an incident defusing. A more formal CISM session will be arranged as necessary and as soon as possible.

### **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems. EAPs address a broad and complex body of issues affecting mental and emotional well-being, such as alcohol and other substance abuse, stress, grief, family problems, and psychological disorders.

### **Supplies and Equipment Management**

**The SAR Coordinator** is responsible for purchasing and maintaining SAR supplies and equipment. To purchase new supplies, the SAR Coordinator will fill out a DI-1 and forward it to the Emergency Services Coordinator for approval.

**SAR gear/equipment** will be inspected after every use whether used in training or on an incident. Any gear/equipment that has excessive wear, abrasion, damaged, exceeding manufacturer's service life, or has been exposed to extreme forces, will be taken out of service and replaced with new.

**Any gear/equipment** that has no visible damage, but is suspected of potentially having an issue will also be taken out of service and replaced with new. Gear/equipment will not be used outside of the manufacturer's recommendations for that particular gear/equipment.

**SAR Cache:** Both Pine Springs and Dog Canyon districts will maintain a SAR cache with the minimum gear/equipment to perform a safe, effective and efficient SAR operation.

SAR caches will be kept in an orderly fashion with gear, equipment, modules, etc. labeled for quick identification by SAR personnel. Supervisors will designate an employee who has the responsibility for maintaining that park/district SAR cache. It is the responsibility of each SAR member to know where gear/equipment is located in their respective park unit/district.

**THE GUMO SAR PLAN** will be reviewed every 5 years and updated as necessary.