

Appendix N -Wilderness Response Guidelines

It should be noted that even during the emergent phase of SAR operations occurring in wilderness, Minimum Tool principles still apply. IC's managing emergency incidents within the Yosemite Wilderness are required to adhere to minimum requirement standards. A Risk Assessment should be completed to determine the tactics which present the safest options for rescuers, and the best patient outcome. An emergency exception to minimum requirement standards may be considered when greater than minimum tool tactics are deemed to be the safest course of action for the rescuers and the patient.

The following guidelines have been established as the minimum tool. **Use of an emergency exception, and deviation from these guidelines will require documented justification by the IC within the final SAR report.** A full minimum requirement analysis (MRA) is not required unless the emergency has ended.

- Helicopter landings/use
 - Utilization of aviation resources should be based on patient care and rescuer safety. Suitability of litter or horse facilitated carry out should be ruled out before utilizing a helicopter evacuation or rescue.
 - Helicopter flights should be coordinated to minimize the number of landings in wilderness.
 - Sling load missions should maximize load capacity/efficiency to reduce total numbers of evolutions.
 - Landing Zones (LZ's) should not be created or maintained in wilderness. Known LZ's will be communicated via the park LZ Map available in the Aviation Management Plan. Temporary landing facilities may be used to meet the minimum requirements of emergency situations. Site improvements determined to be essential for safety reasons during individual emergency situations may be authorized, but no site markings or improvements of any kind may be installed to support nonemergency use.
 - LZ's utilized in emergency situations should be on durable surfaces
- Search operations or extended rescue missions
 - All SAR team members should be equipped for a minimum of 24 hours in the field to avoid unnecessary resupply flights or searcher extractions.
 - SAR planning should rely on in-field operational briefings conducted via satellite phone or radio to avoid flying searchers in and out daily.
 - Searchers hiking less than 5 miles or 2,000 vertical feet to reach their assigned search area should not be flown in. Planning function should consider if searchers can hike in faster than fly in given realistic workload levels at the helibase at the start of the operational period. Searchers waiting for hours at the helibase for insertion when they could hike in faster is a situation to be avoided.
 - Overnight camping locations shall be on durable surfaces using LNT principles
- Use of Mechanical transport/tools
 - Power-drilling/Bolts may be utilized only when natural anchors or previously installed bolts are unavailable.
 - Snowmobiles are limited to paved road corridors.
- Caches of equipment/SAR gear will not be maintained in Wilderness.
- Use of flagging will be minimized, and all flagging removed at end of the incident.
- Stock should be used only on trails or on approved cross-country routes.

- Notifications (i.e. important messages to visitors/employees in the wilderness) will utilize known wilderness travel plans to deploy NPS personnel already in the field, rather than fly personnel to the destination to make the notification.
- Non-aviation resources will be used to locate or reach lost or injured stock
- Per RM 59, SPOT/locator beacons are considered an emergency until proven otherwise. IC's should consider alternatives to helicopter response where the response time will not be seriously impacted (i.e. night or late evening activations, activations near road or trailhead access).

Emergency exceptions to the minimum tool requirement in wilderness end when the emergent phase of the operation is completed.

Guidelines for the transition from emergent response include:

- Once a search subject is located, and searchers not involved in the immediate rescue/recovery should then walk to trailheads for extraction.
- Once a rescue subject is extracted, personnel left at the scene should self-extricate, not relying on aviation resources to return to the front country.
- Property recovery missions (downed aircraft, camping equipment, climbing equipment left in wilderness) shall require an MRA if use of other than the minimum tool is required to complete the mission.
- Fatalities
 - The emergency exception is in place until trained NPS medical or LE personnel can confirm a fatality. Once a fatality is confirmed, the emergency exception no longer applies to the insertion or extraction of NPS personnel.
 - Yosemite will utilize air resources for the recovery of deceased persons located in technical terrain when supported by GAR assessments.