



**Tonto Rim Search and Rescue (TRSAR)
HELICOPTER TEAM
Standard Operating Procedures
P.O. Box 357, Pine, AZ 85544**

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SECTION I. MISSION

The mission of the Tonto Rim Search & Rescue (TRSAR) Helicopter Team is to provide the Gila County Sheriff's Office with highly trained, qualified, and safety-focused volunteer personnel capable of conducting rescues and recoveries as a helicopter rescue specialist in partnership with Arizona Department of Public Safety.

SECTION II. PURPOSE

TRSAR will work in coordination with AZDPS, strictly following their helicopter team policy and procedures. The purpose of this SOP is to define training, certification and currency evaluation of a helicopter rescue specialist (RS).

SECTION III. REFERENCES

A. Training and Evaluation References

- Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) – Air Operations Policy Manual. Provides standards for aviation operations, crew responsibilities, and mission safety procedures.
- Gila County Sheriff's Office – SAR and Aviation Protocols. Local policies for coordination between volunteer SAR teams and law enforcement aviation units.
- National Association for Search & Rescue (NASAR) – Helicopter Rescue Guidelines. Outlines best practices for helicopter-based SAR operations, including hoist, rappel, and safety procedures.

SECTION IV. CERTIFICATION LEVELS

TRSAR has one Helicopter Team certification level that ensures members operate within the guidelines of DPS and necessary demonstrated competencies.

A. Helo Team: Rescue Specialist

Role: TRSAR RS will be available to assist DPS with helicopter rescue or recoveries during air operations.

Authorized Activities:

- Perform RS specific tasks with DPS air rescue crew including rappel to subject, ingress/egress or short haul operations.

- Clear and concise communication with helicopter crew regarding concerning operation planning.
- Work as a landing zone manager and facilitate identifying and securing a landing zone (LZ).

Review Panel

- DPS has the ability to make any status changes of TRSAR RS personnel based on evaluation of skill competency, mandatory training attendance and performance effectiveness.
- Helo team lead will manage scheduling training, rosters and TRSAR personnel regarding team effectiveness and/or issues.

SECTION V. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Team will consist of a number of TRSAR members determined by DPS Training Coordinator. Members may be recommended by team coordinators to be considered by the TRSAR board of directors and discuss the capability to fit into the role of an RS.

A. Baseline Entry and Training Participation

- Completion of a certified rope rescue technician course
- Completion of a certified swift water technician advanced course
- Completion of required DPS 2-day ground school and RS training
- Have a strong sense of situational awareness and operational tempo

SECTION VI. SAFETY STANDARDS

Safety is the highest priority of all Helicopter Team operations.

1. Operates under the authority of the Gila County Sheriff’s Office and in coordination with the Arizona Department of Public Safety at all times.
2. Maintain current required training, certifications, and medical/fitness standards for helicopter rescue operations.
3. Adhere strictly to aviation safety protocols, including rotor-wash awareness, PPE requirements, and aircraft approach/departure procedures.
4. Conduct mission risk assessments prior to deployment and continuously evaluate hazards during operations.
5. Empower all team members to halt operations if unsafe conditions are identified, without penalty or hesitation.
6. Participate in regular safety briefings, after-action reviews, and ongoing proficiency training to reinforce a strong safety culture.

SECTION VII. MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

In accordance with DPS guidelines, the following represents example training requirements and may be modified or updated at the discretion of the DPS Training Coordinator. For example:

A. Annual Requirements

- Attend currency training held 3 times per year (every 120 days) to include:
 - 2 rappels from helicopter
 - Short haul trainings utilizing different air rescue adjuncts
 - Hover ingress/egress
 - One-skid toe in.
- Attend an annual tower day scheduled by DPS Safety Officer
- Attend overwater training every 3 years.

B. Skills Refresher and Re-Evaluation

1. If TRSAR helicopter rescue specialist is unable to attend currency training, you are to notify DPS training coordinator and schedule a make-up date. If unable to make up the training, the rescue specialist is not able to serve in the capacity of a rescue specialist on a helicopter mission until they have completed a currency.
2. DPS dictates when, where and what will be trained on.

C. Documentation

All training, evaluations, and mission participation will be documented and maintained by TRSAR.

Approved by: TRSAR Board of Directors

Effective Date: _____

Review Cycle: Every two (2) years