



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

<b>Approved Date:</b> 04/07/2026	<b>Pages:</b> 5
<b>Effective Date:</b> 04/07/2026	<b>Revision Date:</b> 04/04/2026

### **SECTION I. MISSION**

The mission of the Tonto Rim Search & Rescue (TRSAR) Swiftwater Team is to provide the Gila County Sheriff's Office with highly trained, qualified, and safety-focused volunteer personnel responsible for responding to or managing water rescue and recovery incidents, ensuring operations are conducted safely, efficiently, and in coordination with the Gila County Sheriff's Office.

### **SECTION II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to establish standardized guidelines for technical water operations. Effective incident management relies on a tiered response system based on validated training levels to ensure no member operates beyond their functional capability.

### **SECTION III. REFERENCES**

#### **A. External Certifications**

This section includes information on external certifications. External certifying bodies may include, but are not limited to:

- Rescue 3 International
- Swiftwater Safety Institute (SSI)

#### **B. Training and Evaluation References**

The following publications guide Swiftwater Team training, skill development, and evaluation. TRSAR may adapt, modify, or limit practices contained in these references to meet operational needs, safety considerations, and local environmental conditions:

- Rescue 3 International Swiftwater Rescue Technician (SRT/SRT-A) Training Manual, Current Edition
- Sierra Rescue Swiftwater Flood and Surface Water Rescue Field Guide, Current Edition
- Sierra Rescue River Rescue and Safety Field Guide, Current Edition

### **SECTION IV. CERTIFICATION LEVELS**

TRSAR maintains multiple Swiftwater certification levels to ensure members operate within their demonstrated competencies. These are based on (NFPA 2500 / 1006 Standards).

## **A. Awareness Level – Foundational Safety (Level I)**

Non-entry personnel trained to recognize hazards and support operations from a safe distance. May be taught internally by both technician and operator level personnel at least annually or when new, prospective team members attend team training.

- Focus: Hazard recognition, risk management, and scene size-up from the "Cold Zone."
- Key Skills: Basic hydrology, proper PPE selection, and site control.
- Limitations: Restricted to the Cold Zone. Personnel shall not enter the water or approach the edge unless fully trained for Operations or Technician levels.

Requirements:

- Attend Day One (Knots) of TRSAR Technical Ropes Academy
- Attend Annual Swiftwater Awareness level day taught by Operator or Technician Level Swiftwater personnel

## **B. Operations Level – Support & Shore Based (Level II)**

Responders trained for "low-to-medium risk" shore-based rescues and technical support. May be taught "internally" by certified technicians.

- Permitted Activities:
  - Shore-based reach/throw rescues, hazard identification, and basic wading/self-rescue.
  - May assist in construction and operation of rope rescue systems under direct technician supervision.
- Boat-Based Operations:
  - Support Role: May act as a crew member to assist with recovery and deployment.
  - Limitations: Not an Operator. Operations personnel are not qualified to act as the primary Boat Operator.
- Focus: Proficiency in throw bag deployment, knot tying, and hydrology.
- Operations level personnel are qualified to participate in shore-based night missions.

Requirements:

- Must attend at least 7 monthly Swiftwater Rescue team trainings annual.
- Operator level personnel are required to co-instruct at least two annual trainings alongside a technician-level team member.
- Successful annual evaluation by the Review Panel and team leads.
- Requirements to be signed off by current operations level, SRT-A and technical ropes personnel.

## **C. Technician Level - Active/Lead Technical Role (Level III)**

Highly skilled operators qualified for "high-risk" offensive and in-water operations. Must certify/recertify every 3 years through an accredited outside training agency.

- In-Water Rescues: Authorized for "Go" (contact) rescues and swimming to secure victims.

- Technical Systems: Mastery of advanced rope systems (highlines, live-bait crossings, and mechanical advantage).
- Boat Leadership: Acts as the primary Boat Operator (per FEMA/NFPA standards) and mission lead.
- Advanced Skills: Qualified for night operations and management of watercraft in high-velocity environments.

**Requirements:**

- Technical level personnel must attend at least 10 monthly Swiftwater team training annually.
  - Must attend at least 5 Swiftwater team-based trainings annually.
  - Must attend at least 5 annual technical rope team-based trainings with relevant Swiftwater aspects. Ropes team trainings must be documented and submitted to Swiftwater coordinators.
- Technical level personnel must team teach / instruct at least 3 Swiftwater team trainings annually.
- Successful annual evaluation by the Review Panel.
- Achieve accredited Technician level certification.

**D. Team Trainings**

Team training locations will be determined by team coordinators. They will be a combination of either water or land-based activities or both when possible. Multiple-day trainings, total number of consecutive days, will count towards the monthly annual requirement. These will not count towards teaching requirements.

**SECTION V. CERTIFICATION PROCESS**

The TRSAR Swiftwater Team certification program is structured as a progressive, multi-level system designed to build skills, experience, and operational readiness. Advancement through certification levels is based on training participation, mission experience, and demonstrated competency.

**A. Entry and Training Participation**

1. Members interested in joining the Swiftwater Team begin by attending scheduled Swiftwater team training sessions.
2. Participation in training allows candidates to become familiar with Swiftwater rescue techniques, procedures and operations.

**B. Awareness Level – Foundational Safety (Level I)**

1. Must attend a minimum of 3 Swiftwater team trainings.
2. Must demonstrate watermanship skills from Rescue 3 Training Manual.
3. Must participate in foundational aspects of training in hydrology, swimming and rescue skills.
4. May participate in Swiftwater trainings and missions under Operation and Technician supervision.

### **C. Operations Level – Support & Shore Based (Level II)**

1. To be eligible for advancement, members must:
  - a. Attend a minimum of 8 Swiftwater team training sessions
  - b. Participate in at least 1 Swiftwater mission and participate in a Swiftwater capacity.
2. Demonstrate Swiftwater Awareness knowledge and competency.
3. Demonstrate foundational aspects, knowledge and performance of essential rope skills.

### **D. Technician Level - Active/Lead Technical Role (Level III)**

1. Members at Operations Level will be considered for Technician Level advancement if desired.
2. Determination for advancement will be based on performance and participation.
3. Experience and recommendation by Swiftwater Team Leaders.

## **SECTION VI. SAFETY STANDARDS**

Safety is the highest priority of all Swiftwater Team operations.

1. Safety priority order: rescuer first, team second, subject third.
2. Any member has the authority and responsibility to stop unsafe actions.
3. Safety Officer will be designated for all rope operations and systems
4. All personnel will be restricted to appropriate safety zones of “warm”, “cold” and “hot”.

## **SECTION VII. MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION**

### **A. Skills Refresher and Re-Evaluation**

1. Members who miss annual requirements may be placed on Swiftwater inactive status or level demotion.
2. Reactivation may require refresher training and skills evaluation as determined by the Swiftwater Team Leader(s).
3. Issued gear purchased by TRSAR can be recalled for any reason, at any time.

### **B. Documentation**

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

### **C. Review Panel**

1. Active participating Swiftwater Technician and team leads.
2. Successful annual evaluation by the Review Panel
3. Evaluations may include practical demonstration, verbal explanation and teamwork assessment.
4. Candidates may be retrained and retested on specific deficiencies.

**Approved by:** TRSAR Board of Directors

**Effective Date:** 04/07/2026

**Review Cycle:** Every two (2) years