



**Tonto Rim Search and Rescue (TRSAR)
TECHNICAL ROPE RESCUE 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) Rope Team is to provide the Gila County Sheriff's Office with highly trained, qualified, and safety-focused volunteer personnel capable of conducting technical rope rescue operations.

SECTION II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to define the training, certification, evaluation, and ongoing maintenance requirements for TRSAR Rope Team members. Successful completion of these requirements results in Rope Team certification at the appropriate level and authorizes participation in rope rescue operations consistent with that level.

SECTION III. REFERENCES

A. External Certifications

Rope Team members may obtain certifications from recognized external agencies. Such certifications may be used to support, but do not replace TRSAR Rope Team certification requirements unless specifically approved by the Rope Team Leader and the TRSAR Board. External certifying bodies may include, but are not limited to:

- Arizona Center for Fire Service Excellence (AZCFSE)
- Rescue 3

B. Training and Evaluation References

The following publications guide Rope 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:

- *National Park Service Technical Rescue Handbook*, current edition
- *The Art of Clean Rigging*, Ropes That Rescue, Ltd.
- *Technical Rescue Field Operations Guide*, Pendley, current edition

SECTION IV. CERTIFICATION LEVELS

TRSAR maintains multiple Rope Team certification levels to ensure members operate within their demonstrated competencies.

A. Rope Team Member: ROPE-Awareness (Level I)

Role: Entry-level rope observer who functions under direct supervision.

Authorized Activities:

- Assist during ropes training and missions
- Equipment assistance
- Scene size up, communication relay
- Operate in “safe zone” under Operations direct supervision

Requirements:

- Attend TRSAR Technical Ropes Rescue Academy
- Successful annual evaluation by the Review Panel

B. Rope Team Member: ROPE-Ops (Level II)

Role: Entry-level rope rescuer who functions under direct supervision.

Authorized Activities:

- Participate in the construction of rope systems
- Operate as a steep angle litter attendant or edge assistant
- Perform basic rappelling and ascending tasks
- Participate as an instructor on monthly training within operation training scope

Requirements:

- Attend TRSAR Technical Ropes Rescue Academy
- Successful annual evaluation by the Review Panel
- Achieve accredited Operations level certification

C. Rope Team Member: ROPE-Tech (Level III)

Role: Experienced rope rescuer capable of independent system construction and operation.

Provides instruction, evaluation, and mentorship to Rope Team candidates and members.

Authorized Activities:

- Construct and operate mainlines, belays, and haul systems
- Act as an edge manager or system operator
- Mentor Level I and II candidates
- Strongly encouraged to instruct at two monthly trainings each year

Requirements:

- Minimum of 12 months as a Level II Rope Team Member
- Documented participation in rope trainings and/or missions
- Demonstrated proficiency in advanced systems
- Approval by the Rope Team Leader and Review Panel

SECTION V. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The TRSAR Rope 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 Rope Team begin by attending scheduled rope team

training sessions.

2. Participation in training allows candidates to become familiar with rope rescue concepts, safety practices, and team operations prior to formal certification.
3. Attend a minimum of four (4) Rope Team training sessions within three (3) months prior to the certification course.

B. Initial Certification: Ropes - Awareness (Level I)

1. Candidates who meet the prerequisite training requirements attend a thirty-two (32) hour rope certification course consisting of classroom instruction and field-based practical skills.
2. Upon successful completion of the course and evaluation, the member shall be certified at the Ropes - Awareness (Level I).
3. Awareness Level I members may participate in rope operations under the direction of qualified Rope Team leadership and within the scope defined by training and policy.

C. Secondary Certification: Ropes - Ops (Level II)

1. To be eligible for advancement, a Ropes Awareness Level I member must:
 - a. Attend a minimum of **12** additional rope team training sessions, and
 - b. Participate in **4** rope-related missions or approved training evolutions.
2. After meeting these requirements, the member shall attend the thirty-two (32) hour rope certification course a second time.
3. Upon successful completion and evaluation, the member shall be certified at the Ropes - Ops (Level II), demonstrating increased proficiency in rope systems, operational roles, and team integration.

D. Advanced Certification: Ropes - Technician (Level III)

1. Members certified at the Ropes Operations Level II may be considered for advanced certification based on performance, experience, and recommendation by the Rope Team Leader.
2. Eligible members may be invited to attend an approved external rope rescue academy for Ropes Technician Level III certification.
3. Technician Level III certification represents advanced technical capability and leadership in rope rescue operations and may be subject to additional requirements as defined by the external certifying body and TRSAR policy.

SECTION VI. SAFETY STANDARDS

Safety is the highest priority of all Rope 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.
4. All rescue systems require redundant backups.
5. Life safety systems must meet a minimum safety factor of 10:1.
6. Candidates may assist in system construction, but require:
 - o One inspection by a Rope Team Instructor
 - o One inspection by the TSO
7. Edge safety zones will be established a minimum of six (6) feet from the edge.

8. All systems must pass the “Whistle Test” (hands-free stability).

SECTION VII. MAINTAINING CERTIFICATION

A. Skills Refresher and Re-Evaluation

1. Members who miss annual requirements may be placed on Ropes inactive status or level demotion.
2. Reactivation may require refresher training and skills evaluation as determined by the Rope Team Leader.
3. Issued gear purchased by TRSAR can be recalled for any reason, at any time.
4. Annual requirements by certification:
 - Awareness: Attend 10 Technical Ropes Training
 - Operations: Attend 12 Technical Rope Trainings Annually
 - Technician: Attend 12 Technical Ropes Training Annually. Teach at TRSAR Ropes Training Academy; Assist with Training activities

B. Documentation

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

C. Review Panel

1. The Review Panel will consist of the instructors for the Ropes Certification course.
2. Evaluations may include practical demonstrations, verbal explanations, written testing, and teamwork assessment.
3. Candidates may be retrained and retested on specific deficiencies within six (6) months of the certification course.

Approved by: TRSAR Board of Directors

Effective Date: _____

Review Cycle: Every two (2) years