



No Charge for Rescue Golden, CO

May 7, 2009

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No Charge for Rescue in Golden, Colorado

Executive Summary:

The City of Golden has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars and has worked diligently to create a brand image of a friendly city catering to recreation, tourists and families. Unfortunately, the city's image has been damaged in recent years by its requirement to bill recreationalists and tourists when they require emergency services.

In 1991 the City of Golden passed ordinance 16.08.090, which required the city to impose fees for provision of emergency services outside of the city. The ordinance states:

a) Fee Imposed. There are hereby established Fire and Emergency Response Fees which shall be assessed to compensate the city for fire and emergency services of the fire department provided outside the municipal limits of the City of Golden. Any party benefiting by such services, including any party requesting the services if such party has a duty to respond, shall be responsible for the payment of such fees.

b) Fee Schedule. Fire and emergency response fees shall be imposed for all calls to the city and the fire department which result in responses outside the city limits and shall be assessed according to the fees established by resolution of city council.

c) Exceptions. The fees assessed pursuant to this ordinance shall not apply to responses of the fire department which are necessitated or otherwise requested pursuant to mutual aid agreements or other contractual obligation between the City of Golden and any other parties to such contracts.

d) Payment. All fees assessed under this ordinance shall be submitted to the appropriate party. Payment shall be due 30 days after submission of such fees. Interest shall accrue at the rate provided in the Colorado statutes for amounts not paid when due.

This ordinance is detrimental to the city of Golden, its residents and its businesses for the following reasons:

1. It tarnishes the image of Golden as an outdoor recreational center.
2. Golden businesses and especially those catering to the recreationalist and tourist are irreparably harmed financially.
3. The weight of negative publicity overshadows the weight of cost recovered
4. It has been well documented that people fearing a charge for rescue will delay their call for help. This delay could turn a relatively simple rescue into a tragedy both for the recreationalist and the city or both.

The City of Golden's businesses and not-for-profit organizations cater to this significant outdoor recreation business segment. These recreationalists and tourists are also customers of Golden businesses. This negative image may direct these potential customers to other nearby communities.

The City of Golden should discontinue the practice of charging, or discontinue providing this type of service in the unincorporated areas of Jefferson County.

1.0 Tarnished Image:

The City of Golden is proud to be known as a city “Where the West Lives!” It is widely known as a wholesome and extraordinarily friendly city, catering to recreation, tourists and families.

This is an important business strategy for the city. In today’s economy, tourism is critical to financial stability, especially when drawing tourist’s dollars from nearby; as long-distance tourism travel declines.

A city’s image is its most valuable asset – critically so. It is how the city “is known” and it can have serious affects – both negative and positive – upon the city, both short-term and long-term. That image, crafted over decades, can suffer immeasurable damage from one adverse incident. In today’s Internet savvy world, a story can make its way across the nation and around the world in seconds.

When Golden encourages individuals to come play in the neighborhood, then charges those consigned to an unfortunate circumstance for their rescue, it sends a powerfully negative message.

For example, when a Kansas tourist reached the Rockies in 2007 – at Golden – as many adventurous people did 160 years ago, he could not resist taking in all the grandeur before him, taking a casual hike. Yet when he accidentally sprained his ankle (this could be done in the city by simply missing your step on the curb of a city street) his story of what many believed to be an outrageous bill reverberated across the country (see Appendix A). People were flabbergasted; how many of them unconsciously registered a damaging memory of “Golden, Colorado”?

When the American Alpine Club, a world-renown organization, first contemplated moving to Golden from New York City, the new Executive Director, Charley Shimanski, spoke of making Golden “the next Boulder.” Golden would cater to active and adventurous outdoor recreationalists, making Golden the center of the American outdoor recreation universe: hiking, climbing, kayaking, rafting, ice climbing, mountaineering, and environmental education (See appendix B).

The American Mountaineering Center and the organizations that now call it home can say it has become true:

- American Alpine Club
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Outward Bound West
- Colorado Trail Foundation
- Colorado Fourteeners Initiative
- Climbing For Life

However when these adventurous sportsmen, from the casual hiker just outside the city to the skilled ice climber in Clear Creek Canyon, need emergency assistance because a mere accident or something (usually) out of their control, face a bill for that critical aid that others across the state do not receive, they ask themselves, “Wait a minute, this is supposed to be such a visitor-friendly area – why are they billing me?”

2.0 Irreparable Harm to Golden's Businesses:

These sportsmen and recreationalists are catered to by a plethora of local shops that offer equipment for sale and rent, and which provide great local-area advice and/or guide services. Why should recreationalists that face no more actual risk here than anywhere else continue supporting Golden outdoors shops, coffee houses, restaurants and bars when they can easily spend their money in Boulder, Evergreen or Idaho Springs?

As the City of Golden has grown, so have its businesses and they rely on the revenue from non-residents for their livelihoods. "We've seen business grow tremendously from out of town business, not locally... One bad incident is detrimental; it sticks in your mind a long time... The fee on rescue is counterproductive to the tax revenue."

When they choose elsewhere, local businesses are affected, as are sales tax revenues.

3.0 Negative Publicity vs. Cost Recovery

Back in 2007, that same Kansas tourist asked a simple question of a local outdoor business. "Where can I go for a hike today and see some of the sites?" When he accidentally sprained an ankle and needed rescue the negative publicity for the City of Golden skyrocketed. Over 50 news reports and articles were published both locally and nationally discussing this practice of charging for rescue. Titles for these articles included:

- "Angels of mercy who bill - Golden has wrong idea in charging for rescue"
Rocky Mountain News, June 20, 2007
- "Charging for rescues is a dangerous policy - The Golden Fire Department plans to bill a Kansas man for rescuing him from a canyon. This could discourage others from relying on 911 services."
The Denver Post, 06/19/2007
- "Kansas man's Colorado hike could cost him thousands"
USA Today, 7/9/2007

Not all these incidents hit main stream media, but are often reported verbally or more extensively via the Internet. In this particular case, outdoor Internet blogs scathed the city for its insensitivity, some warning not to recreate in Golden or to do business there; from just the following three, tens of thousands of people viewed postings on this topic.

- www.summitpost.com (peak climbing)
- www.mountainproject.com (kayaking)
- www.mountainbuzz.com (rock climbing)

This is not an isolated incident. Over just the last five years there are numerous examples of recreationalists (river boaters, kayakers, base jumpers, rock and ice climbers) that have been charged for emergency services that have caused negative publicity for the City of Golden.

This negative publicity outweighs any financial reimbursement; because as stated by Golden's own Fire Department, the cost recovery for these rescues is negligible. As reported in the Rocky Mountain News article titled "Mountain rescues: Fee or free?" by Julie Poppen on 6/27/2007:

"Fire Chief John Bales said bills are sent to individuals needing rescue only about three times per year. And it's more of a symbolic gesture, since fewer than one in five of those people pay up. "Billing is not an issue," Bales said. "Collection is an issue. Do we really go after them? Of course not. Nobody is going to lose their home because they can't pay a bill."

Why should the city of Golden subject itself to this negative publicity, if the charges imposed are rarely paid and do not cover expenses for the rescue?

4.0 Unintended Detrimental Consequences

The issue of charging fees for rescue operations has developed, over years, a critical unintended consequence that endangers those already needing emergency help.

It is commonly known in the search and rescue specialty discipline of the emergency services world – but not in other emergency service disciplines – that people will severely delay calling for help, not call for help and even refuse emergency help, because they believe they cannot afford an emergency response. (see appendix B). This is due to “remembering” a “widely reported (frequently incorrectly) instance of a large bill being sent to the survivor.”

Any delay can cause further danger to the person in peril and place their life in jeopardy. Delays can place emergency personnel in extreme danger and unnecessarily compound and extend the length of the emergency operation.

U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral James Loy said it best in 1999:

“If the specter of financial reimbursement hung over the decision to report maritime distress, we could get fewer calls, we would get calls during later stages of emergencies, and more people would die at sea. This factor alone outweighs any consideration of how much money we might recoup”

For the distinct reason of dispelling the notion that “I cannot afford for someone to help me, so I cannot call for help” the SAR community is UNITED IN OPPOSING ANY CHARGE levied for what is commonly a “SAR” response. It matters not who issued the bill or what agency – “SAR,” “rescue,” “fire-rescue” – responded to the call; in the mind of the public “we” and “rescue” are all the same.

This position is in agreement with positions of other leading search and rescue organizations including but not limited to:

- The Colorado Search and Rescue Board (1987)
- The United States Coast Guard (1999)
- The Mountain Rescue Association (2006)
- The National Association for Search and Rescue (2009)

Conclusion:

If the City of Golden cannot afford to perform this emergency SAR service outside the city or in non-urban area without charging for it, alternative solutions should be identified, allowing anyone to reasonably expect emergency aid without regard to their circumstance.

Appendices:

- A. Compilation of news reports of Kansas hiker's rescue.
 - B. Golden 2 hour vacations website, featuring outdoor thrill-seeker activities.
 - C. CSRB compilation of delayed calls for help, refusal of help.
 - D. Positions of MRA, CSRB, NASAR, USCG.
 - E. Colorado Search and Rescue Fund Guidelines.
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Appendix A-001

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Kansas man's Colorado hike could cost him thousands

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TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — David Seals, his brother and a friend thought their hike in Colorado's Clear Creek Canyon would take no longer than four hours.

They also didn't count on receiving a more than \$5,000 rescue bill after Seals, of Topeka, severely sprained his ankle and had to be helped off the side of a mountain.

The bill for the June 11 rescue came from the Golden, Colo., Fire Department, the squad that arrived to the scene fastest.

"That is probably on the high end of what we charge for a rescue," Fire Department spokeswoman Sabrina D'Agosta told The Associated Press. "But it's because it was at 1 o'clock in the morning, it was raining so we had very dangerous conditions. And it's a really, really steep canyon area, and it's a very difficult rescue to bring someone down from there."

The \$5,000 pays for personnel and equipment, D'Agosta said. The Fire Department had to run its heavy rescue truck and lighting truck during the entire rescue, which took 10 hours, she said.

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Seals sprained his ankle when he jumped off some granite. After walking for a while with the injury, he realized he couldn't go any farther.

Garcia and Seals' brother, Robert, went for help and found an emergency phone.

Despite the incident, Seals still plans to hike — and in the same area. He said he wants to return to the exact site in Colorado on the one-year anniversary of his injury.

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[Appendix A-002](#)

Topeka man receives costly bill after mountain rescue

Colorado fire department bill more than \$5 thousand

By Adrielle Harvey
The Capital-Journal

Published Thursday, June 28, 2007

Topekan David Seals was on vacation with his brother Robert and friend Eurich Garcia on June 11 when they decided to take a hike in Clear Creek Canyon near Golden, Colo. The three expected the hike to take no longer than four hours.

What they didn't expect was a bill for more than \$5,000 after David Seals, 35, was rescued from the mountain due to an ankle injury.



Anthony S. Bush / The Capital-Journal

David Seals, left, of Topeka, was rescued off the side of a mountain in Golden, Colo., earlier this month after spraining his ankle while hiking with his friend Eurich Garcia, right, and brother Robert Seals. Garcia and Robert Seals left David and reached an emergency phone to call for help. Now, the Golden Fire Department is charging David Seals more than \$5,000 for the rescue.





Submitted

Eurich Garcia and Robert Seals left behind these supplies for David Seals when they trekked from the canyon to summon help. The camera flashes were to be used to attract attention.

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RESCUE BILL

- Vehicles

Heavy Rescue, 1 x \$145 for 10 hours = \$1,450

Command Vehicle, 1 x \$35 for 10 hours = \$350

Subtotal for vehicles = \$1,800

- Personnel

Firefighter, 2 x \$20 for 10 hours + 0.5 cleanup = \$420

Rescue/firefighter, 2 x \$30 for 10 hours + 0.5 cleanup = \$630

Captain/rescue director, 3 x \$40 for 10 hours + 0.5 cleanup = \$1,260

Safety officer, 1 x \$50 for six hours = \$300

Assistant chief, 1 x \$50 for 10 hours = \$500

Dispatcher, 1 x \$15 for five hours = \$75

Chief, 1 x \$75 for six hours = \$450

Subtotal for personnel = \$3,335

- Total direct costs = \$5,135

15% administrative fee (if not paid in 30 days) = \$770

Total with administrative fee = \$5,905

"I expected there to be somewhat of a bill, but I expected most of it to be hospital," Seals said.

The Golden Fire Department billed Seals for costs incurred during the rescue. The fire department was the first of several rescue squads to respond to the scene.

Garcia, 28, is handling Seals' efforts to dispute the charges. He said the Golden Fire Department is a volunteer fire department and only four of its employees who helped in the rescue are paid staffers. The rest were volunteers.

A letter to Seals states: "The Golden Fire Department is a municipal department funded by the taxpayers of the city of Golden to provide services within the city limits. Because there are areas adjacent to the city of Golden that are not protected by emergency services, the Golden Fire Department is allowed to respond to assist with emergencies outside of the city limits. However, this service must not rely on city of Golden funding to pay the costs of services delivered outside of the city."

However, Garcia said the location from which Seals was rescued is actually under the jurisdiction of the Alpine Rescue Team by a memorandum of understanding with the sheriff's department. Alpine, which showed up after the fire department, provides rescue services at no cost.

Garcia said he doesn't think Seals should be charged by Golden because it was Alpine's area.

The Golden Fire Department and the Alpine Rescue Team couldn't be reached Wednesday night.

Seals has 30 days to pay the bill before a 15 percent administrative fee is tacked on. After 90 days, another 8 percent is added.

Seals said along with the bill from the fire department, he has to pay hospital bills and an ambulance fee. He said the third rescue squad, the West Metro Fire Rescue, wrote it off as a training exercise.

Seals said the area they were hiking was rugged, but "it's meant to be hiked." He and Garcia said there was a rough trail, but it ended about halfway up.

"There was a dirt path, but it was one that nobody really uses," Garcia said.

Seals jumped off some granite and suffered a severe ankle sprain at about 6:15 p.m. on June 11. He continued walking for about four hours until his injury kept him from going farther.

His brother Robert, 32, and Garcia left him with some supplies before climbing out of the canyon to call for help from an emergency phone at about 1:30 a.m.

Rescuers arrived at about 2 a.m., but due to steep, rocky terrain and rainy weather, it was about 9:30 a.m. before Seals was lowered more than 600 feet from the mountain.

Seals said he plans on hiking again and is planning a trip back to the very location he was rescued from on the event's one-year anniversary.

Adrielle Harvey can be reached at (785) 295-5617 or adrielle.harvey@cjonline.com.

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Appendix 1-003

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Tuesday, June 19, 2007

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Charging for rescues is a dangerous policy

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The Golden Fire Department plans to bill a Kansas man for rescuing him from a canyon. This could discourage others from relying on 911 services.

By The Denver Post
Article Last Updated: 06/19/2007 11:07:37 AM MDT

The hiker from Kansas did almost everything right: He didn't go alone, carried water and a member of his group even had a GPS unit.

But he made one mistake. He chose to hike in a part of Jefferson County that one sheriff's office spokesman called "no man's land" - that is to say, it's unincorporated and unserved by a fire department.

That decision appears destined to cost David Seals about \$5,000. That's the amount of the bill Golden Fire Department plans to send the 34-year-old from Topeka for evacuating him last week from Clear Creek Canyon after he severely twisted his ankle.

Golden is setting a dangerous precedent that will discourage people from calling for help or refusing it once rescuers arrived. City officials should reconsider their policy.

The situation unfolded this way, said Jim Shires, a Jefferson County Sheriff's spokesman: The sheriff's office got the call, but has no rescue team. The county has an agreement with Golden Fire, so that in an emergency Golden will cover the area where Seals was hurt.

Thus, it was up to Golden to determine how best to carry out the mission, Shires said. Golden took on the rescue with help from the West Metro Fire and Alpine Rescue Team, an all-volunteer group.

Department officials say their employees spent hours under difficult conditions using expensive equipment. They say they can't justify to their taxpayers doing such costly work outside their district boundaries without reimbursement.

"That's the policy, to charge those who are rescued," said Sabrina D'Agosta, Golden communications manager. In this instance, Golden's charges are particularly egregious because Alpine Rescue, which is nationally accredited to handle the most dangerous rescues, was ready to bring Seals down at no charge. Originally, West Metro Fire planned to charge Seals \$2,400, but backed off.

It's easy to envision how rescue charges could encourage people to make a bad situation worse. Injured people might try to get out of predicaments by recruiting friends or delaying calls for help until conditions worsened so much that more lives would be at stake.

It's time, we think, for departments such as Golden to revisit their out-of-district rescue charge policies. Since the county has overarching responsibility for such operations in unincorporated areas, it ought to come to some agreement with its partners over costs.

One thing's for sure: Public policy that could discourage people from seeking help is a dangerous path that serves no one.

Top Opinion Items

- Deciding on Christo
- Letters to the editor
- Charging for rescues is a dangerous policy
- Crisis, opportunity in Mideast
- Jazz and courage trump gangs
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Top Stories

- Wildfire spotted west of Morrison
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- Grandfather blames officials for bear attack
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Golden River Sports is a full-service fly fishing and kayak shop. They offer kayak lessons and rentals, fly fishing and fly tying classes, as well as rod and reel rentals. Spend a few hours of your afternoon running the rapids or wetting a line.

The 2 Hour Lookout for Bikes Vacation

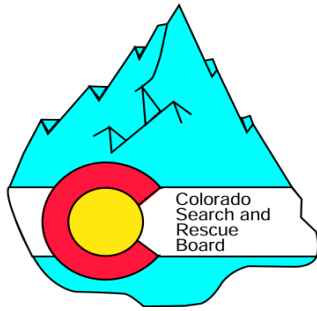
This short but strenuous climb is a favorite among locals. A bike ride up **Lookout Mountain** includes a back-side loop with an elevation gain of about 1,600 feet over 15 miles. Spend two hours feeling the burn and enjoying the views.

The 2 Hour Climb Every Mountain Vacation

If you're seeking adventure, but would rather learn about it than actually do it, **The American Mountaineering Center** is perfect for your afternoon vacation. The center houses more than 17,000 volumes on mountaineering—the largest collection in the Western Hemisphere. You can also check out artifacts, art, climbing gear, and maps that are a historical testimony of mountaineering since the 1800's.

The 2 Hour Up, Up and Away Vacation

Things look pretty good from up here. **Life Cycle Balloon Adventures** offers year round balloon flight packages for two to six people. In true ballooning tradition, you'll have a sunrise launch followed by a complimentary picnic-style brunch and champagne toast. Take two early morning hours and enjoy a bird's eye view of Golden!



Examples of endangered persons refusing SAR help, waiting to call for help or hiding from help because of fear of large bill!

First hand accounts from emergency personnel involved

Climbers attempt self-rescue after dangerous accident

Boulder County, Colorado

Not long after the unprecedented media coverage of a search for missing skiers near Aspen, Colo., a climber accidentally rappelled off the end of their rope, and fractured his pelvis. Fearing the cost of a rescue as recently grossly mis-portrayed in the media, they did not call for help and tried to self-evacuate, resulting in additional injuries. Eventually the climbing partner went for help. Rescuers were exposed to added hazard and difficulty of having to perform the rescue in the middle of the night.

Climber hobbles 3,000' down mountain without rescue

Whatcom County, Washington

A climber from Canada descending Mt Baker had an accident at 9500', fracturing her ankle. Two nearby climbing physicians pronounced it likely fractured. When she asked them about a charge for rescues in the US, they told her it could be perhaps \$10,000. She decided she couldn't afford to be rescued. She took some pain medication, tightened up her plastic boot real tight and slowly hobbled down the mountain. Alerted by another climber with a cell phone, members of Bellingham Mountain Rescue met her at the 6500' level. When told that the rescue team doesn't charge for rescues she collapsed -- admitting to considerable pain. The US Navy used one of its rescue helicopters in this real emergency to train its crew to rescue marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen awaiting rescue in mountains anywhere they operate.

Man miles from shore refuses rescue from lake

Utah County, Utah

A man and a woman were stranded in the water at night 2-3 miles from shore in Utah Lake. Either their boat sank or a watercraft quit. We found them at around 23:00, and as we pulled along the woman and prepared to

help her into the boat, the man, twenty feet away, shouted "DON'T TOUCH HER!" It wasn't until he was assured that we didn't charge for rescue that he allowed us to give them a lift. Both were both coherent; hypothermia would have set in within hours and they likely would not have survived the night.

Victim says "I can't afford help"

Summit County, Colorado

A climber on the south side of Quandary Peak (14,270') got stuck. She called 9-1-1 and the on-call SAR team coordinator made contact with her by cell phone. She repeatedly refused assistance and said she just "wants to be talked out of this area." This particular area of Quandary is quite dangerous and it was after dark when she called. After going back and forth with her for some time, the SAR coordinator finally asked why she didn't want help and her answer was "I can't afford it". Once he explained to her that there would be no charge she instantly changed her tune and SAR went in and assisted her out.

Snowmobiler first calls family, not 9-1-1, for help

Boise County, Idaho

A stranded snowmobiler called, first, his wife for help. She then called the SAR team. When the wife told her husband that she was talking to SAR, he told her to hang up. This was after recent media coverage of the local ski area charging for "out of area" rescues. After assurances that the SAR team does not charge, they finally asked for help. The marine/backcountry deputy that reported this instance said he is regularly asked by the reporting party if there will be a bill for SAR.

Man becomes hysterical over perceived of cost of rescue

Los Angeles County, California

A rescue of a 20-ish man involved a technical rescue of 150'-180' to raise him up to a dam access road. The person was "borderline hysterical" because a county FD helicopter was

Examples of endangered persons refusing SAR help, waiting to call for help or hiding from help because of fear of large bill!

First hand accounts from emergency personnel involved

present and he was afraid of being liable to pay for it. It was not until the rescuer with the person convinced him that there would be NO costs that it was safe to work with the victim on a 40°-70° slope.

Lost runner hides from SAR

Tucson, Arizona

A gentleman went for an evening run with his two dogs in the desert near his house. He had minimal clothing and took only a water bottle. He became lost and hunkered down with the dogs. One of the dogs ran off and was found by searchers, which led them back to the subject, who was now moving - to avoid searchers. The man said he heard searchers during the night, however he was afraid he would be billed for the search, so he did not respond. The next morning he deliberately tried to avoid searchers while trying to sneak back to his house.

Overdue persons avoid SAR

Douglas County, Colorado

Two adult dirt bike riders were reported overdue after dark. A dirt bike passed a responding SAR team member on the highway, who turned around to follow the bike. The two pulled into the parking lot of a local establishment. Another SAR member was already there, briefing the proprietor. The rider was one of the two overdue persons. Somehow the two riders knew that SAR was en route; I'm guessing that when the riders got to a place with cell phone coverage, one of them called home and was told SAR had been notified. This rider rode back on a non-motorcycle trail in an effort to avoid SAR. He said that he was worried that he would be billed.

Missing woman tells SAR she is not the missing party

Mt. Hood National Forest, Oregon

This search occurred right after Oregon passed a law allowing subjects of SAR missions to be billed. "Our assignment was to check beside the trail to the lake. On the way, we heard a radio transmission that a searcher thought he had found Linda. We thought it was over, but a bit later he reported that the woman he saw had never heard of Linda. The search continued and we prepared to head up the trail toward our search area. Before we got on the trail we were asked to hold our position, so we spent about half an hour talking and waiting for something to happen. Then we found out why we were put on hold. A dog handler had a positive find. He had spotted Linda who was trying to hide, then had to chase her down to talk to her. It seems that the first woman was indeed Linda but had denied it when asked. Only later was the dog handler able to get her to admit that we had found our quarry."

Women searches for husband by herself for hours, dangerous weather arrives

Mt. Evans Wilderness, Colorado

A newly married wife dropped off her new husband for some high altitude hiking and he failed to return to be picked up. She said on their way to the mountains, they had joked about which of their bank accounts would pay for "the \$10,000 rescue" if anything happened to him. Instead of calling for help, she drove the road for three-four hours looking for him, worried about the bill she anticipated. She finally called, but the search began late at night and by then the peak was enveloped in clouds. Searchers had visibility of a just a few feet and risked walking off the top of 600' cliffs.

MRA's Position Statement on charging for SAR

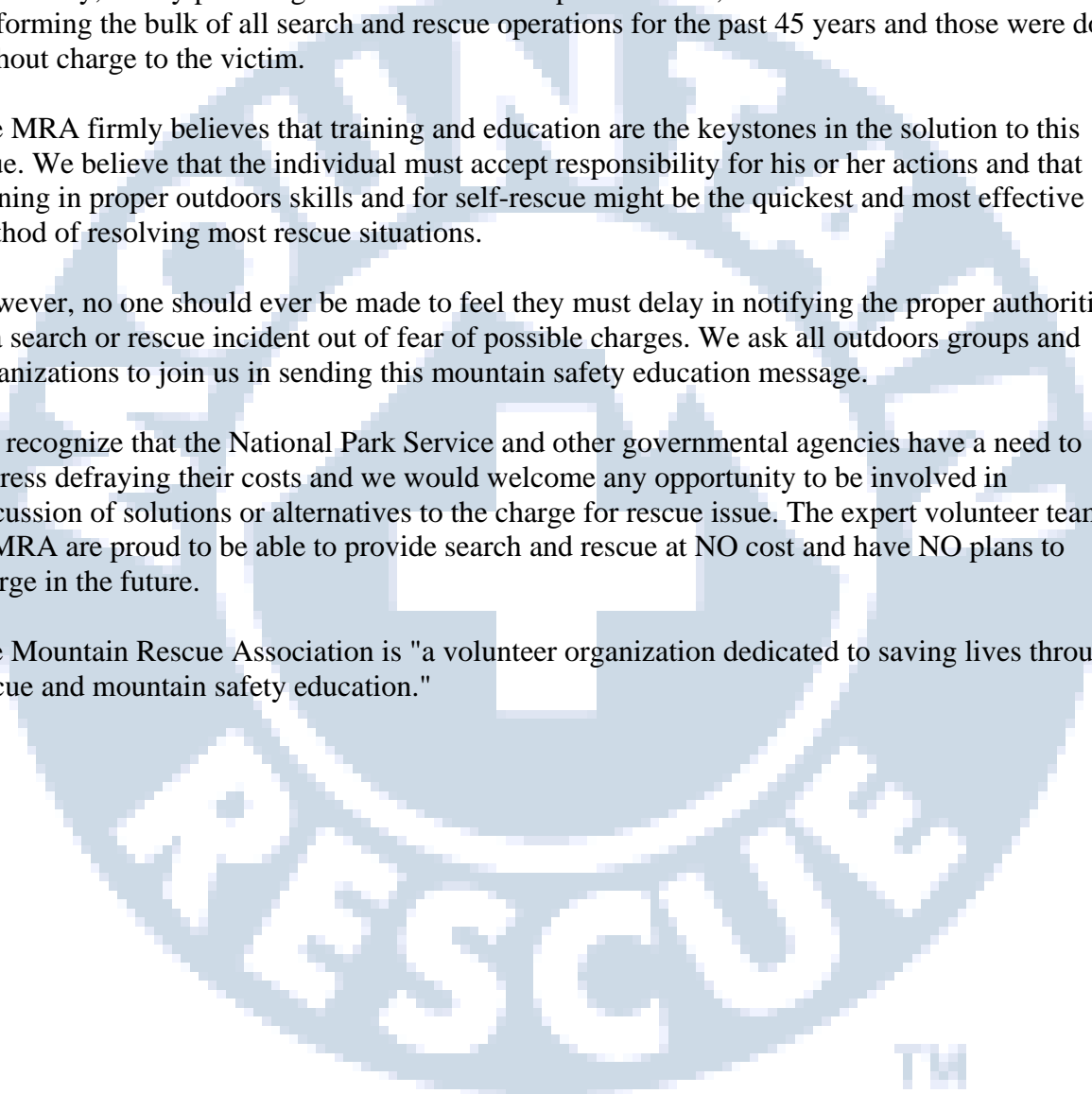
The Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) with 80 teams from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom -- most of which are comprised of expert volunteer members -- work through or for a local government search and rescue authority. In an effort to give back to the community, defray public agencies' costs and keep taxes down, the MRA teams have been performing the bulk of all search and rescue operations for the past 45 years and those were done without charge to the victim.

The MRA firmly believes that training and education are the keystones in the solution to this issue. We believe that the individual must accept responsibility for his or her actions and that training in proper outdoors skills and for self-rescue might be the quickest and most effective method of resolving most rescue situations.

However, no one should ever be made to feel they must delay in notifying the proper authorities of a search or rescue incident out of fear of possible charges. We ask all outdoors groups and organizations to join us in sending this mountain safety education message.

We recognize that the National Park Service and other governmental agencies have a need to address defraying their costs and we would welcome any opportunity to be involved in discussion of solutions or alternatives to the charge for rescue issue. The expert volunteer teams of MRA are proud to be able to provide search and rescue at NO cost and have NO plans to charge in the future.

The Mountain Rescue Association is "a volunteer organization dedicated to saving lives through rescue and mountain safety education."





CSRB Policy Statement Regarding Charging Victims or their Families for Costs and Expenses of Search, Rescue and Recovery Efforts

Adopted 10/13/1987

www.coloradoSARboard.org

1. At no time, and in no manner, should an individual member of a volunteer search and rescue organization benefit monetarily from rendering emergency service to the subject of a search, rescue or recovery activity.
2. Volunteer search and rescue organizations will not charge for services they provide pursuing or in support of search, rescue, recovery operations, and no request for payment or reimbursement by other agencies or third parties should attribute any portion of the amount requested to any volunteer search and rescue organization.
3. Volunteer search and rescue organizations may call upon the services of other organizations which do routinely charge, and for which services a victim would normally consider it to be customary to be charged. Such services might include rescue or medical helicopters such as Flight for Life or Air Life, ambulance services, or delivery of a victim into the care of a physician, clinic or hospital.
4. Volunteer search and rescue organizations may obligate themselves for extraordinary expenses with the expectation that the victim or his/her family will reimburse them only if the victim or the family has given prior approval to the particular arrangement. This circumstance will be rare because usually either limited time will preclude obtaining such approval or there will be sufficient time to permit the family to contract directly for such services.
5. Volunteer search and rescue organizations are not opposed in principle to request made by themselves, sheriff's departments, or other agencies for reimbursement for actual extraordinary expenses incurred by the organization, department, or agency provided that such request is clearly an appeal based upon a perceived moral obligation under the particular circumstances, and that is not a demand for payment nor apparently based upon either legal right or routine policy. Any such requests should be made privately and not be publicized, so that the victims and their families are not embarrassed and so that the general public does not infer that such requests for reimbursement are routinely made.
6. Volunteer search and rescue organizations will actively oppose and dissociate themselves from any effort to enforce collection of expenses from a victim or his family, and from any effort to obtain statutory or other legal authority to do so.



Position Statement Billing for Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations

April 2009

The search for, or rescue of, someone in peril is among the most humanitarian of acts. It is recognized that, to the extent possible, individuals and communities have a moral obligation to aid those in danger, regardless of any legal obligation.

NASAR recognizes the ultimate decision to bill a survivor for SAR operations, or a victim's family for attempts to save their family member's life, is that of the local authority responsible for SAR. However, lifesaving action must take precedence and political, economic, jurisdictional or other such factors must remain secondary when dealing with lifesaving matters. Authorities with responsibility for SAR and SAR organizations can not allow cost reimbursement to delay response to any person in danger or distress.

A perceived or actual belief that the subject of a SAR mission will be billed for the lifesaving actions undertaken on their behalf must not delay or interfere with a timely call for help. Such delays can, at the minimum, cause further danger to the person in peril and, at the maximum, place their life in jeopardy. Delays can place SAR personnel in extreme danger and unnecessarily compound and extend the length of the SAR mission. Because of these factors, and to eliminate the fear of being unable to pay for having one's life saved, SAR services should be rendered to persons in danger or distress without subsequent cost-recovery from the person(s) assisted unless prior arrangements have been made.

The mission of SAR organizations is to save lives, not just the lives of those who can afford to pay the bill. As such, methods and means should be developed and used that diffuse the cost of humanitarian SAR operations among the many, allowing anyone to reasonably expect emergency aid without regard to their circumstances.

Founded in 1973, the National Association for Search and Rescue comprises more than 10,000 volunteer and paid search and rescue professionals. These professionals work at the local, state and national level in land, aviation, canine, water and technical rescue SAR; and communications, emergency management, fire and rescue, emergency medical care and law enforcement. NASAR conducts hundreds of training courses and thousands of exams each year. More than 11,000 people hold any of 11 NASAR certifications in SAR operations.

*The National Association for Search and Rescue
P.O. Box 232020, Centreville, VA 20120 (Washington, DC)
www.nasar.org
(877) 893-0702*

United States Coast Guard Position on Charging for SAR

Commandant's speech (Admiral James Loy) at the U.S. Naval Institute conference on April 22, 1999:

"I oppose seeking reimbursement for any search-and-rescue case. Two very bad things would happen if we opened this Pandora's Box.

First, financial considerations would keep people from reporting their conditions and seeking help in the early stages of distress. In the business world, time is money. In the search-and-rescue business, time is life. Just as the fire department wants you to call 911 as soon as you smell smoke in your house, the Coast Guard wants to hear from you as soon as you begin to get concerned about your ability to handle the conditions you're facing on the water. If the specter of financial reimbursement hung over the decision to report maritime distress, we could get fewer calls, we would get calls during later stages of emergencies, and more people would die at sea. This factor alone outweighs any consideration of how much money we might recoup.

There is another compelling factor. If we charged for rescues, the Coast Guard would forever battle the possibility of having financial considerations affect our search-planning decisions. We would be endlessly second-guessed. Why did we send that helicopter after the guy who could pay us back but only a small boat after the deckhand on the fishing boat? Are we absolutely sure that reimbursement wasn't a factor?

Similarly, it would be impossible to construct an objective test for deciding when people are so wealthy that they ought to bear the cost of their rescues. You'd be surprised what a properly motivated boater really can afford. Presented with the choice of paying for his rescue or drowning, a man treading water in the middle of the ocean would gladly mortgage his house if that's what it takes to be hoisted into the helicopter hovering overhead. However, it is manifestly immoral to associate our humanitarian obligation with the cost of fulfilling it.

The Coast Guard values the life of the most destitute immigrant the same as that of the wealthiest adventure seeker. We would devote the same resources to rescue either one, and we have absolutely no interest in distinguishing between them. We assign cutters and aircraft to particular cases based on the nature and location of the distress, not on the status of the person who is in distress. I do not welcome legislative or policy initiatives that might distract my operational commanders from the business of saving lives.

The Coast Guard is recognized as a good steward of public funds. That's why the Coast Guard will continue its work to prevent distress situations through public education, requirements for carrying safety equipment and other measures. That's why the Coast Guard will continue to reduce the taxpayer's burden by referring nonemergency cases to commercial towing services when it is appropriate to do so.

However, the cost of a few high-profile cases pales before the moral and humanitarian effects of changing the way we respond to the "routine" cases we handle every year with the attendant saving of 4,000 lives. As long as I'm commandant, you won't hear any of my Coast Guard radio operators say, "Roger, sir. I understand you're taking on water and preparing to abandon ship. Can you tell me your position and give me the number of a major credit card?"



Colorado Search and Rescue Board
P.O. Box 631452
Highlands Ranch, Colorado 80163
www.coloradoSARboard.org

The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund A Simple Explanation

The Colorado Search and Rescue Board is a membership organization comprising search and rescue units, sheriffs' offices and support organizations. Under an MOU with the Colorado Department of Emergency Management, the CSRB serves as Colorado's SAR resource office, coordinating mutual-aid responses at the request of county sheriffs or others with responsibility of SAR. The CSRB is represented on the Colorado Search and rescue Fund Advisory Council by two members of the SAR community.

Executive Summary

- The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund (SARF) was created in 1988 to support county sheriffs with the cost of large or lengthy SAR mission.
- The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund reimburses eligible **direct expenses incurred** in conducting SAR missions.
- The fund does not make payments to individuals served by government agencies or SAR units.
- The fund does not insure individuals.
- The fund draws its income from a surcharge on hunting and fishing licenses; snowmobile, boat and off-road vehicle registrations; Colorado Habitat Stamps and sales of Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue cards (CORSAR cards).
- The SARF is administered by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.
<http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/fa/sar/index.html>

History

In 1988, Colorado's General Assembly created a "Search and Rescue Reimbursement Fund," administered by the Division of Wildlife of the Department of Natural Resources [CRS 33-1-112.5].

After a lengthy search for a hunter lost in Mineral County, Colorado's sheriffs and the search and rescue community developed this method to help financially strapped counties deal with searches on which they spent substantial money.

Since then, each fishing and hunting license sold in Colorado has had a twenty-five cent surcharge added to it, which goes into the fund. In 1993, the same surcharge was added to boat, snowmobile and off-road-vehicle registrations. These five state-mandated licenses and registrations were the only methods by which the state could require outdoors recreationalists to pay into the fund.

In 1994 the legislature created a "Hikers Certificate." Entirely voluntary, anyone could buy the \$1.00, one-year, or \$5.00, five-year, certificate which contributes 25% of it to the fund.

In 1995, the legislature transferred the fund's administration to the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). In 2001, the legislature transformed the "Hiker's Certificate" into the "Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue Card." This amendment also greatly simplified the means of selling the cards.

What does the fund do?

Under rules found at 8 CCR 1307-1, the SARF reimburses a county sheriff and/or its search and rescue organization(s) for actual operational expenses incurred in search and rescue missions.

Actual operational expenses are those reasonable costs incidental to SAR activities including, but not necessarily limited to: fuel, operating costs, repair and rental, of motor

vehicles, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, snowmobiles, boats, horses, generators and any other equipment necessary or appropriate for conducting SAR activities; reimbursement of mileage at the appropriate state rate; meals and room rental for personnel and any other similar expenses. Operational expenses do not include any salary, overtime or stipend paid to any person permanently employed by a SAR agency or political subdivision of the state. Operational expenses do not include indirect operating expenses, such as stand-by costs of vehicles and equipment owned by a unit of local government.⁽¹⁾

Commonly reimbursed are expenses for fuel, lost or damaged equipment, food for searchers, helicopter time for searching or transporting rescuers (but not medical helicopter transportation), etc. Repair or replacement of equipment is commonly reimbursed. Search and rescue teams are the usual beneficiary of such money. Requests for reimbursement must be made by a county sheriff. Reimbursement by the SARF is limited to an eligible search and rescue mission:

Eligible Search and Rescue Mission: Mobilization of persons or agencies with specialized search and rescue skills authorized by a County Sheriff's Office or statutorily designated search and rescue political subdivision of the State of Colorado for the purpose of locating or rescuing a person within the State of Colorado from an area beyond the boundaries of normally available emergency services.⁽²⁾

The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund is not an insurance fund for eligible persons.⁽³⁾

The SAR Fund payments come under one of three tiers. The first tier is reimbursement of expenses for a search or rescue mission involving anyone who has purchased one of the seven state licenses, registrations or cards. This is paid within 30 days of receipt.

Tier two is payments are for expenses incurred in missions involving a relative of a holder: parent, grandparent, child, grandchild or sibling.

The third tier is the greatest benefit of the fund: a grant program to fund search and rescue training and equipment; and all other unreimbursed SAR mission expenses.

Fund intended to benefit SAR agencies and organizations, not the public

The SAR Fund is state-administered pool of money, from which a sheriff and it's authorized search and rescue agency can recoup some costs; and which helps fund SAR training and equipment through grants. It has never been intended to pay any bill issued to a member of the public. There has never been a "public" aspect to the program.

Advisory Board

A Search and Rescue Fund Advisory Board advises the Department of Local Affairs on Search and Rescue Fund issues, and reviews claims and grant requests. It comprises 11-15 representatives from search and rescue teams, county sheriffs, county commissioners, CORSAR Card vendors, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Division of Parks and Recreation, hunters, fishermen, wildlife advocates, off-highway vehicle users, boaters, snowmobilers, the Colorado Search and Rescue Board, backpackers, hikers, mountain bike riders, equestrians, and cross-country skiers; with a minimum of three county sheriffs and two members of the Colorado Search and Rescue Board,

The Colorado Search and Rescue Fund has been copied to serve as the basis for similar programs in New Hampshire, Utah, and Wyoming.

1. 8 CCR 1307-1 (2) a
2. 8 CCR 1307-1 (2) f
3. 8 CCR 1307-1 (3) g
4. 8 CCR 1307-1 (6) a-c



Department of Local Affairs

Division of Local Government



Department Home > Division of Local Government > Financial Assistance > Search and Rescue

Financial Assistance

Community Development Block Grants

Community Service Block Grants

Conservation Trust Fund

Direct Distribution

Downtown Development Program

Energy/Mineral Impact Fund

Gaming Impact Fund

New Energy Communities Initiative

Search and Rescue Fund

Smart Growth/Heritage Planning Grants

Volunteer Firefighter Pension

Waste Tire Fund

Resources

Division of Local Government

Regional Managers

Financial Assistance Programs

Technical Assistance Programs

Office of Smart Growth

State Demography Office

Geographic Information Systems

Resources

State Search and Rescue Fund

Program Contacts

Overview

FAQ

Purchase a Search and Rescue Card

Advisory Council

Sheriff Information

Vendor Information

PDF | Annual Report

PDF | Rules and Regulations

Program Contacts:

Department of Local Affairs
222 S. 6th St., Room 409
Grand Junction, CO 81501

Steve Denney
Program Manager
970.248.7308
steve.denney@state.co.us

Sue Schneider
Vendor Support, Mission Reports, Data Management
970.248.7311
sue.schneider@state.co.us

Overview:

Responsibility for the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund lies with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. It is administered out of the department's Northwestern Regional Office in Grand Junction and operates pursuant to C.R.S. 33-1-112.5. The fund was created in 1987 for the purpose of reimbursing political subdivisions and search and rescue organizations for the costs incurred in conducting search and rescue operations and to further provide funding for the purchase of search and rescue related equipment and training. The fund is not insurance and does not reimburse individuals.

The Department of Local Affairs is assisted with administration of the fund by a group of individuals making up the Search and Rescue Advisory Council. Members of the council are appointed by the Executive Director of the Department of Local Affairs. The council is comprised of individuals knowledgeable and interested in search and rescue in the State of Colorado. The council will have a minimum of eleven members and maximum of fifteen and at all times will have a minimum of three county sheriffs, and two members of the Colorado Search and Rescue Board. In addition, the director may request nominations from search and rescue teams, county commissioners, CORSAR card vendors, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Division of Parks and Recreation, hunters, fishermen, wildlife advocates, off-highway vehicle users, boaters, snowmobilers, backpackers, hikers, mountain bike riders, equestrians, and cross-country skiers.

1. What is the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

The fund was created in 1987 for the purpose of reimbursing political subdivisions and search and rescue organizations for expenses incurred in conducting search and rescue operations within the State of Colorado.

2. How do I contribute to the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

2. How do I contribute to the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

If you purchase fishing or hunting licenses, a stand-alone Colorado Wildlife Habitat Stamp, or register an off-highway vehicle, boat or snowmobile, you automatically contribute to the fund. Another way to contribute to the fund is by purchasing a Colorado Outdoor Recreation Search and Rescue Card.

3. What types of expenses are reimbursable under the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

The fund reimburses on actual operating expenses incurred by local governments and teams during search and rescue missions. Those expenses include reasonable costs incidental to SAR activities such as: fuel, repair and rental of motor vehicles, fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters (when used for search and/or rescue not medical evacuation), snowmobiles, boats, horses, generators and any other equipment necessary or appropriate for conducting SAR activities; reimbursement of mileage at the appropriate state rate; meals and room rental for personnel and any other similar expenses.

4. Is the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund insurance?

No, the fund is not an insurance program. It does not reimburse individuals for expenses incurred such as medical transport and medical expenses. Medical transport includes helicopter flights or ground ambulance.

5. Who manages the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

Responsibility for management of the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund lies with the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. It is administered out of the department's Northwestern Regional Office in Grand Junction and operates pursuant to C.R.S. 33-1-112.5.

6. Are my interests represented when it comes to managing the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund?

Yes, the Department of Local Affairs is assisted with administration of the fund by the Search and Rescue Advisory Council. The Council is comprised of individuals knowledgeable and interested in search and rescue in the State of Colorado. At any given time, Council membership includes representatives from: county sheriffs, the Colorado Search and Rescue Board, county commissioners, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Colorado Division of Parks and Recreation, hunters, anglers, wildlife advocates, off-highway vehicle users, boaters, snowmobile enthusiasts, backpackers, hikers, mountain bike riders, equestrians, elected officials and cross-country skiers.

7. Who will come help me if I am lost or injured?

Who responds to your emergency is dependent on existing state law and local ordinances. Rescuers may be volunteer and/or public safety agencies. Colorado residents and visitors are well served by dedicated volunteer search and rescue teams. By participating in the fund, you are supporting those volunteers who give their time and expertise to provide a safety net for unforeseen events that may occur in Colorado's beautiful backcountry.

8. Will I be billed for expenses related to my rescue?

Some municipalities and special taxing districts have billed victims for some expenses related to their rescue. We are unaware of a volunteer search and rescue team who has billed a victim for costs the team has incurred. In all cases, the Colorado Search and Rescue Fund attempts to reimburse on all eligible expenses to prevent billing of victims. The fund is unable to reimburse any salary, overtime or stipend paid to any person permanently employed by a SAR agency or political subdivision of the state. In addition, the fund does not reimburse indirect operating expenses, such as stand-by costs, of vehicles and equipment owned by a local government.