Search and Rescue is a Public Good

The Search And Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota (SARVAND) agrees with the worldwide expectation, as stated in the United States National Search and Rescue Plan (2016), that emergency services should provide the following services without charging:
1) search for missing,
2) rescue of living, and
3) recovery of deceased persons.

These search and rescue (SAR) services are considered a public service freely available to all.
While a large amount of time, energy, and resources may be expended in finding and rescuing or recovering an individual, the SAR community has learned that charging for SAR services may create negative consequences and increase the risks faced by responders.

SAR volunteers are community-minded individuals who see a benefit to society when these unpaid professionals provide SAR services. This difficult and dangerous work generates a great deal of individual and team pride. SAR responders freely provide their skills, experience, physical capabilities, mental fortitude, and teamwork to serve North Dakota communities and those who are missing, lost, injured, or deceased. SAR teams, in many ways, help to sustain the North Dakota way of life.

The Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota believes that:
1. When responding to an emergency we provide the best service possible regardless of an individual's race, ancestry, color, gender, religion, age, sexual preference, veteran status, citizenship, physical or mental capabilities, or financial situation.
2. We may work with and request the assistance of others who routinely do charge, and for which services a subject would normally consider to be customary to be charged. Such services might include helicopters, ambulance services, or other medical care facilities.
3. We may enter into financial agreements with those who desire non-emergency or non-standard search and rescue services or services outside what is financially feasible for a volunteer search and rescue organization. Such agreements may be to assist sporting events (backcountry races of mountain bikes, runners, and horseback riders for example) or public gatherings where additional medical & rescue support is needed; or during a state or federally declared disaster.
4. We are not opposed to appropriate requests for reimbursement for expenses incurred and encourage donations to all non-profit search and rescue organizations.
5. We take no position regarding law enforcement issuing a criminal citation or seeking reimbursement from individuals regardless of whether that individual receives SAR services. Additionally, we are not opposed to volunteers or non-profit search and rescue organizations receiving restitution as reimbursement from those who commit a crime when SAR services have been provided to the perpetrator.
6. We recognize that this general position cannot possibly cover every unique situation, this is not specific legal advice, and, as non-profit organizations, SAR teams rely on generous donations to continue to provide SAR services.

Travis Bateman

Travis Bateman
Founder
Badlands Search and Rescue
Search And Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota