Service Standard 3.1.17
Land Rescue Units and Operations

Version	2.0
SOPs	SOP 3.1.17-1 Rescue Accreditation SOP 3.1.17-2 Rescue Operator Training and Certification SOP 3.1.17-3 Rescue Response SOP 3.1.17-4 Rescue Operational Capability Audit SOP 3.1.17-5 Rescue Reporting SOP 3.1.17-6 Rescue Equipment and Inspection
Policy Owner	Deputy Commissioner Operational Capability
Policy Contact	Director State Operations
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1. Purpose

1.1. This Service Standard and the associated standard operating procedures outline the requirements for the accreditation, training, equipment and operational response for rescue related activities as defined in the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (SERM Act) and NSW State Rescue Policy.

1.2. The Rural Fire Service (RFS) is an accredited Rescue Agency as defined in the State Rescue Policy and as such has a responsibility to comply with the requirements of that Policy.

1.3. This Service Standard is to be read in conjunction with the State Rescue Policy as issued by the State Rescue Board (SRB) from time to time. Where there is a conflict between the State Rescue Policy and this Standard, the matter is to be referred to the Deputy Commissioner Operational Capability for determination.

1.4. This Service Standard excludes rescue operations conducted by the RFS from rotary wing aircraft, noting that RFS rotary wing aircraft may assist with the transportation of rescue personnel and equipment at the request of the Rescue Coordination Officer (RCO).

2. Policy

2.1. The RFS will ensure that brigades comply with the SERM Act, the State Rescue Policy and any other relevant SRB directives at all times.

2.2. Any RFS brigade seeking accreditation to undertake rescue operations must be supported and endorsed by the Local Rescue Committee and Regional Rescue Committee.

2.3. RFS brigades seeking to undertake rescue operations are to be accredited in accordance with SOP 3.1.17-1 Rescue Accreditation.

2.4. Any RFS Authorised Rescue Brigade (ARB) must meet all required training, pre-requisites, and certifications in accordance with SOP 3.1.17-2 Rescue Operator Training and Certification.

2.5. The District Manager must ensure that at all times, the ARB maintains operational capability.

2.6. The ARB is subject to annual audit in accordance with SOP 3.1.17-4 Rescue Operations Capability Audit.

2.7. Accredited RFS ARBs must ensure that rescue operations are reported in accordance with SOP 3.1.17–5 Rescue Reporting.

2.8. In relation to flood rescue, a brigade may be trained and equipped to undertake and support flood rescue operations, but not necessarily accredited. Where this is the case, the brigade will be considered as a local surge capability.

2.9. Equipment and training relevant to accredited rescue operations will only be provided to brigades that have accreditation through the SRB or otherwise in accordance with SOP 3.1.17-6 Rescue Equipment and Inspection.

2.10. The Manager Operational Field Support is the primary contact for matters involving the SRB.

3. Definitions

3.1. For the purpose of this Service Standard the following definitions apply:

a. **Accreditation:** formal approval by the Minister to undertake rescue in NSW

b. **Accredited:** formally recognised by the State Rescue Board as having a particular status or being accredited to conduct rescue activities

c. **Accredited Rescue Brigade (ARB):** those RFS brigades that have achieved accreditation under the State Rescue Policy

d. **Area of responsibility:** boundaries used to define specific geographic areas where an authorised rescue brigade has the authority to plan and conduct operations.

e. **Authorised:** those authorised by the RFS to perform rescue tasks.

f. **Currency:** the process that recognises that a member's skills, training and capabilities are valid and captured via operational activity or skills maintenance and recorded in the authorised RFS system.

g. **Domestic animal:** an animal domesticated by humans that lives and breeds in a tame condition and depends on humankind for survival.

h. **Domestic rescue (DR):** involves the rescue of occupants trapped in or by household settings. This includes children with fingers in drain plugs, the removal of rings, and individuals who are incapable of leaving their home due to ill health.

i. **Flood rescue (FR):** all rescue activities where a person(s) or domestic animal(s) are in actual or threatened danger due to relatively high water level which overtops the natural or artificial banks of any part of a stream, river, estuary, or dam. This can include local overland flooding associated with drainage before entering a water course, and/or coastal inundation resulting from super-elevated sea levels and/or waves overtopping coastline deficiencies. Any vehicle or pedestrian access way is deemed to be an artificial bank. Flood rescues can encompass rescue from canyons and waterways where swiftwater flowing within the banks is the norm. See also In-water flood rescue below.

Flood Rescue and Swiftwater Rescue are operationally different. However, as the training competencies and the qualifications received for completion of training are the same for In Water Flood Rescue and Swiftwater Rescue, this Policy references In Water and Swiftwater Flood Rescue collectively as 'In Water Flood Rescue'. This includes arrangements for

dispatch and coordination, accreditation and training competencies

j.   **General Land Rescue (GLR):** the capability and capacity to undertake all rescue activities involving the safe removal of persons or domestic animals from actual or threatened danger of physical harm. A GLR unit has the skills and equipment required to undertake road crash rescue, agricultural, animal, domestic and industrial rescues and is trained in Urban Search and Rescue Category 1.

k.   **Industrial Rescue (IR):** involves the safe removal of persons who have had an accident in the workplace including factories, warehouses and building sites. It involves disentanglement from machinery and extrication from heavy machinery such as cranes. Rescue of occupants trapped in elevators and escalators is also included.

l.   **In-water flood rescue:**

m.   **Land Search and Rescue (LANDSAR):** the co-ordination of land search and rescue operations for the provision of life saving assistance to people in distress and imminent danger of loss of life.

n.   **Marine Rescue (MR):** a rescue performed on open, enclosed or inland waterways.

o.   **Rescue:** means the safe removal of persons or domestic animals from actual or threatened danger of physical harm.

p.   **Rescue Coordination Officer (RCO):** the NSW Police Force Radio Operations Group Rescue Coordination Officer is responsible for coordinating the response of rescue units, including RFS rescue units.

q.   **Rescue crew:** competent and current rescue operators.

r.   **Rescue equipment:** sufficient and appropriate equipment to perform the tasks for which the unit has been accredited.

s.   **Rescue unit:**

t.   **Rescue vehicle:** a vehicle that is designed, adapted or equipped for use in rescue work and is clearly marked with the word 'RESCUE', or is fitted with warning devices such as flashing lights, or siren, or both.

u.   **Rescue vessel:** a vessel that is designed, adapted or equipped for use in rescue work and is clearly marked as a rescue vessel.

v.   **Resources:** all personnel, vehicles, plant and equipment available, or potentially available, to respond to an incident and carry out tasks.

w.   **Road Crash Rescue (RCR):** the capability required to gain access to and extricate casualty/ies from vehicles travelling on the road including cars, motorcycles, buses, trucks and semi-trailers while minimising the potential for further injury and preserving the integrity of evidence.

x.   **Urban Search and Rescue Category 1 (USAR Cat 1):** the capability required to provide safe and effective rescue support to an urban search and rescue (USAR) incident as a member of a first responder rescue team. It involves assisting with the rescue and removing surface (lightly trapped) casualties or deceased victims, applying basic search techniques such as carrying out limited debris removal and following safe work practices.

y.   **Vertical Rescue (VR):** any heights or depths situation where person(s) need resources to gain access to, move within, and extricate from hazardous environments utilising rope based and/or mechanical systems, in order to ensure the safety of person(s) and/or animal(s).

z.   **Victim:** the person or animal being rescued.

4. Document control

Release history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	26 Feb 2019	Initial release
2.0	10 Jul 2025	Review and update

Approved by

Name	Position	Date
Peter McKechnie	A/Commissioner	10 July 2025

Related documents

Document name
State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989
Rural Fires Act 1997 No 65
NSW State Rescue Policy
Service Standard 1.1.34 Workplace Complaints Resolution
Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the RFS

SOP 3.1.17-1
Rescue Accreditation

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the process for RFS brigades to achieve accreditation for rescue operations under the State Rescue Policy.

2. Procedures

Stage 1 – State Rescue Board (SRB) support

2.1. The SRB support process is formal acknowledgement that the brigade can expect to attain accreditation once an operational capability audit has been undertaken.

2.2. This support authorises the brigade to commence undertaking the RFS rescue training program.

2.3. SRB support for an application is valid for 12 months only, after which a new application is required.

2.4. Brigades that have received SRB support are **not** authorised to undertake rescue operations.

2.5. Applications for general land rescue will be completed strictly as per this SOP.

2.6. Prior to seeking support through the SRB, brigades are to seek support from the District Manager, Area Commander, Director State Operations and approval from Deputy Commissioner Operational Coordination (DCOC).

2.7. Once approved by DCOC, applications for SRB support will be completed by the Operational Field Support team and will include consideration of community risk and need, brigade capacity to undertake 24 hour/7 day per week response, and level of support locally from other emergency services.

2.8. The application is then submitted to the SRB though local and regional rescue committees, facilitated by the Operational Field Support team.

Accreditation

2.9. 'Accreditation' means formal approval by the Minister to undertake rescue in NSW. The approval provides the authority to undertake rescue operations under the coordination of the NSW Police in the nominated area of operations.

2.10. Prior to seeking accreditation, brigades must undertake and satisfy the RFS Rescue Operational Capability Audit in accordance with SOP 3.1.17-3.

2.11. All applications for accreditation require the approval of DCOC and are submitted to the SRB by the Manager Operational Field Support.

2.12. Once accredited for rescue, a brigade will be granted Accredited Rescue Brigade (ARB) status.

Withdrawal of accreditation

2.13. If an ARB is no longer able to meet the minimum requirements to maintain accreditation, the ARB is to notify its District. The District is to notify the Manager Operational Field Support. Any application for withdrawal of rescue accreditation must be approved by DCOC, prior to making application to the State Rescue Board.

2.14. Application for withdrawal of rescue accreditation must be made in writing to the State Rescue Board, through the local rescue and regional rescue committee.

2.15. The SRB will forward a letter advising the RFS of the formal withdrawal.

3. Related documents

– SRB Rescue Accreditation Proposal
– Operational Capability Inspections Report

SOP 3.1.17-2
Rescue Operator Training and Certification

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) SOP outlines the required training, pre-requisites, and certification for RFS members to perform rescue operations.

2. Procedures

Rescue training

2.1. Rescue training and certification will be available to members of RFS brigades that have rescue accreditation in accordance with SOP SS3.1.17 – 1 Rescue Accreditation.

2.2. Due to the nature of rescue operations and the RFS requirement to comply with State Rescue Policy, the training pre-requisites for members nominating for rescue training include the following:

    a. greater than 18 years of age

    b. certified competent in Bush Firefighter (BF)

    c. hold a current certification in First Aid Application (FAA), or equivalent first aid certification, and

    d. have membership status of 'Operational' on the brigade register (SAPHR) at an Accredited Rescue Brigade (ARB).

2.3. For ARBs that hold Road Crash Rescue (RCR) only, the following training modules are required:

    a. Participate in a Rescue Operation (PiaRO)

    b. Road Crash Rescue (RCR), and

    c. Crew Safety and Welfare (CSW).

2.4. ARBs that hold General Land Rescue (GLR) accreditation are required to complete the following modules in addition to RCR:

    a. Urban Search and Rescue Category 1 (USR-FR), and

    b. Industrial and Domestic Rescue (IDOM).

2.5. In addition, any driver of an RFS rescue vehicle is required to be certified in Rural Fire Driver (RFD).

2.6. All rescue training courses will be conducted in accordance with Service Standard 6.1.3 Training in the RFS and its associated SOPs and relevant standards.

Road Crash Rescue and General Land Rescue Operator certification

2.7. To satisfy the requirements of the State Rescue Board and this Service Standard, an RFS member to be certified as an RFS Rescue Operator must hold the following units of competency:

Unit of Competency	PiaRO	RCR	CSW	IDR	USR(FR)	RFD
PUASAR022 Participate in a rescue operation	X					
PUALAW001 Protect and preserve incident scene	X					
PUASAR024 Undertake road crash rescue		X				
PUAOHS002 Maintain safety at an incident scene			X			
PUASAR026 Undertake industrial & domestic rescue				X		
PUASAR023 Participate in an urban search and rescue Category 1					X	
PUAVEH001 Drive vehicles under operational conditions (drivers only)						X

RFS rescue operator identification

2.8. An RFS member who is a member of an ARB, has achieved certification, and is current as a Rescue Operator is to identify themselves by:

    a. placement of the word **RESCUE** on either side of member's helmet, and

    b. wearing epaulettes that contain the word **RESCUE**. Where a Rescue Operator also holds rank, the word **RESCUE** is to be below their rank.

2.9. An RFS member with **RESCUE** upon their helmet and / or epaulettes, who is not a member of an ARB, and/or is not current or qualified as a RCR or GLR Operator may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.34 Workplace Complaints Resolution.

RFS Rescue Operator currency and recertification

2.10. RFS Rescue Operator certification will be valid for three (3) years, before a recertification needs to be undertaken.

2.11. Certified Rescue Operators are required to maintain regular training to ensure operator currency and skills maintenance.

2.12.	A training schedule will be provided by Operational Field Support to the District for each rescue unit to ensure all components of rescue are covered in a 12-month cycle. Targeted training topics will be scheduled on multiple occasions during the 12-month program.

2.13.	The District Officer responsible for Learning and Development will ensure rescue training requirements as prescribed by Operational Field Support are included in the Annual Training Plan.

Brigade-based rescue training and skills maintenance

2.14.	The District Manager must ensure the ARB undertakes required ongoing training and skills maintenance and that these are included in the Annual District / Area Training Plan.

2.15.	The District Manager must ensure that all training events of an ARB are recorded in the authorised membership database (SAP LSO). Recording of these activities in the authorised database will provide necessary evidence for the purpose of an audit of the ARB.

2.16.	Brigade or District based rescue training must be coordinated by a Rural Fire Instructor (RFI) who holds a current rescue operator certification.

2.17.	Brigade or District based rescue training may be conducted or coordinated by an instructor from another rescue organisation (e.g. VRA). The District or the ARB is to consult with the Operational Field Support team prior to engaging an instructor from another agency.

2.18.	Multi-agency skills sheets have been developed and are available for ARBs to utilise to maintain their skills in rescue.

2.19.	Each qualified rescue operator will maintain a Skills Maintenance log. This log will record all training activities including initial training, ongoing formal and informal training sessions as well as recertification events. Attendance at rescue incidents is not to be included in rescue training records.

2.20.	The District Manager will ensure the undertaking of a review of local rescue specific training records every six months to ensure compliance with SRB requirements.

3. Definitions

3.1.	For the purpose of this policy document the following definitions apply:

4. Related documents

–	Land Rescue Foundations Skills Sheets

–	Road Crash Rescue Skills Sheets

–	Skills Maintenance Log

SOP 3.1.17-3
Rescue Response

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the process for dispatch and response to rescue incidents by an Accredited Rescue Brigade (ARB).

2. Procedures

Operational unavailability

2.1. If an ARB becomes temporarily unavailable to attend rescue incidents for any reason, the ARB is to notify the District Duty Operations Officer (DDOO). The DDOO must immediately inform the Operational Communication Centre (OCC).

2.2. The OCC must inform the State Duty Operations Officer (SDOO) who in conjunction with the DDOO shall consider the circumstances related to the ARB unavailability and determine actions to assist the ARB in improving availability.

2.3. If the unavailability is temporary, the ARB is to notify their District of the timeframe that they are unavailable. Districts are to complete the Rescue Unit Unavailable/Available notification form and send to Manager Operational Field Support for actioning.

2.4. If an ARB is likely to be offline for an extended period, the SDOO is to notify the Manager Operational Field Support and request the development of an action plan with the goal to return the ARB to a minimum operational capability within six months.

2.5. The SDOO shall ensure that the NSW Police RCO is informed of the ARB unavailability, including any timeframes of expected return to operational response capability. The RCO must also be notified once the ARB is available again.

Operational response

2.6. Activations for rescue are coordinated by the NSW Police.

2.7. Activations for rescue incidents will be received via the NSW Police RCO to the OCC providing incident details and a rescue incident number. The rescue incident number is to be recorded in ICON.

2.8. Any activation of an ARB for rescue incidents outside of this SOP must be immediately notified to the OCC who in turn will notify the RCO.

2.9. Dispatch of an ARB will be done through the OCC, via CAD.

2.10. A minimum of two (2) qualified and currently certified Rescue Operators will be responded to all rescue incidents.

2.11. Drivers of rescue appliances are to hold the appropriate licence and have current Rural Fire Driver (RFD) certification.

2.12. NSW Police may call-off rescue units if rescue is not required. If an ARB is called-off by NSW Police enroute to a rescue incident, they are to return to station.

2.13. An ARB may provide fire protection at a rescue incident only where there is sufficient crew to allow both the rescue and fire operation to be performed safely. Otherwise, an additional resource must be dispatched to provide fire protection.

2.14. Rescue Operators should not take images and/or video of deceased, injured or other victims of a rescue incident, without the express permission of the NSW Police Force.

2.15. Following a response to a rescue incident, members of the ARB should undertake a post incident debrief (after action review) with any recommendations captured and reported to the District and recorded in the centralized lessons management system.

2.16. Upon finalisation of a rescue response, the ARB shall complete required post incident reporting.

3. Related documents

– RFS Brigade Incident Report Summary form

– Rescue Unit Unavailable/Available Notification form

SOP 3.1.17-4
Rescue Operational Capability Audit

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the process for RFS Operational Capability Audits of Accredited Rescue Brigades (ARB), or where brigades are seeking rescue accreditation.

1.2. RFS Operational Capability Audits are internal audits to ensure that each brigade is meeting the requirements of the State Rescue Policy.

1.3. Brigades may also be subject to Regional Rescue Committee and state-based operational capability inspections as outlined in the State Rescue Policy.

2. Procedures

RFS Rescue Operational Capability Audit

2.1. The Manager Operational Field Support will cause all ARBs who hold a rescue accreditation to be audited annually.

2.2. All brigades seeking accreditation for rescue are required to undertake the RFS Rescue Operational Capability Audit (ROCA), these will be facilitated by Operational Field Support.

2.3. The ROCA will be undertaken and reported in the form and structure approved by the DCOC.

2.4. The Manager Operational Field Support will nominate person(s) to conduct the ROCA, in conjunction with each ARB and District.

Audit outcomes

2.5. The ROCA shall have a focus on assisting brigades in meeting the required operational capability to be accredited and remain current as an ARB.

2.6. The completed ROCA report is to be submitted to the Manager Operational Field Support within 21 days of undertaking the ROCA.

2.7. Having received and considered the ROCA the District Manager in consultation with the Manager Operational Field Support shall seek to undertake such outcomes required to achieve or maintain rescue accreditation within their respective ARB.

3. Related documents

– RFS Operational Capability Checklist

SOP 3.1.17-5
Rescue Reporting

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the process for the reporting of rescue activities undertaken by the RFS.

2. Procedures

Reporting

2.1. The RFS is required to submit to the SRB the following reports:

    a. Monthly rescue activities

    b. Annual Operational Capability, and

    c. Other reports as requested by the SRB.

2.2. The Manager Operational Field Support is responsible for the preparation of rescue activity reports, the Annual Operational Capability report, and any other reports requested by the SRB.

2.3. The Manager Operational Field Support is responsible for the submission of required reports to the SRB and be the RFS point of contact for State Rescue Board related matters.

2.4. All reports and papers submitted to the SRB must be reviewed by the DCOC, on behalf of the Commissioner prior to lodgement.

3. Related documents

    – Sample SRB Annual Report

SOP 3.1.17-6
Rescue Equipment and Inspection

1. Purpose

1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) outlines the equipment and inspection requirements for an Accredited Rescue Brigade (ARB).

2. Procedures

Rescue equipment

2.1. Only RFS ARBs are permitted to obtain, stow and operate rescue equipment.

2.2. The State Rescue Policy requires any accredited rescue unit to carry rescue equipment *'sufficient and appropriate to the tasks for which the unit has been accredited'*.

2.3. Only rescue equipment approved or specified by the RFS may be acquired or issued to an ARB.

2.4. Rescue equipment should only be carried on approved rescue appliances, provided by the RFS.

2.5. The Operational Field Support team will provide an ARB with its initial allocation of rescue equipment, upon accreditation in accordance with SOP 3.1.17 – 1, to meet the requirements of the State Rescue Policy.

2.6. Allocations of rescue equipment will be entered into the approved RFS asset management system (currently SAP EAM).

2.7. The Operational Field Support team will facilitate annual inspection, servicing and maintenance of rescue equipment, including hydraulic and pneumatic.

2.8. Replacement and repair of rescue equipment after initial issue by Operational Field Support is the responsibility of the District.

Equipment inspections

2.9. RFS approved rescue equipment must be inspected in line with manufacturer specifications.

2.10. Notwithstanding 2.8 above, all rescue equipment must be inspected at least annually in accordance with section 38 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.

2.11. Inspections of rescue equipment are to be recorded within the approved asset management system or otherwise in the provided rescue equipment audit log (currently SAP EAM).

2.12. The use of the approved asset management system and the rescue equipment audit log is mandatory and District Managers are responsible for ensuring availability, completion and accuracy of information contained within.

3. Related documents

– RFS Rescue Vehicle and Equipment Checklist

– RFS Rescue Rope Log Cordage Register