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Standard Practice for Workers' Compensation Coverage of Emergency Services Volunteers¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice defines the application of insurance benefits for emergency services volunteers and units in the manner and extent as provided for under the workers' compensation statutes of the state in which the volunteer or unit provides services.

1.2 This practice identifies the basic types of emergency service volunteer, and the types of activities that should be covered by workers' compensation insurance.

1.3 This practice includes both emergency service units who operate as organized resources to a public authority legally responsible for the provision of search and rescue and other emergency services, as well as those volunteers who respond to a general request to the public for their services.

2. Terminology

2.1 *activity period*—The period during which the emergency services volunteer, unit, or auxiliary is exercising the skills for which it has been requested.

2.1.1 *Discussion*—This activity period may include a wide variety of functions, including but not limited to: a search and rescue team member searching or climbing a cliff, a dog team handler following a scent; a firefighter engaged in suppressing a fire or rescuing a person from a burning building; an ambulance driver or medic providing medical assistance; a tracker leading a tracking team; a disaster worker in a collapsed building; a pilot engaged in an air search flight; or emergency communications personnel providing communications during a time of need.

2.2 *auxiliary unit (AU)*—an individual, or a collection of individuals, forming a unit called to respond by a legal authority responsible for an emergency response function, which otherwise has no standing as a formal division or resource of that authority. For the purposes of this practice, the auxiliary status of an ESU means it has no legal responsibility

for the services itself within the jurisdiction of the agency, and no authority to provide them without acting under that of the agency.

2.2.1 *Discussion*—The auxiliary unit is typically organized as a division of an agency (as defined in 2.12), or as a non-profit corporation as defined in IRS Section 501(c)3, and which has a command structure that enables it to fit within the incident command system of a requesting agency. Such a unit is expected to adopt a training program sufficient to maintain a skill level equal to or greater than recognized national standards or as acceptable to the agency requesting their services, and will typically engage in community education programs. Some examples of an AU are volunteer search and rescue resources, air search squads, emergency managers, search dog specialists, ambulance squads, fire fighters, disaster service workers, and communication specialists who are asked to respond to assist another state, county, or national park to provide their services to augment those available to the authorized requesting agency in that other state or jurisdiction.

2.3 *call-out*—the notice and request to activate an ESU or ESV by an agency for the purpose of providing emergency services on behalf of the requesting agency.

2.3.1 *Discussion*—If members are requested to respond directly, through radio paging, for example, then each member is considered to be called-out and responding as of that time.

2.4 *check-in*—the process by which one party notifies a second of being in-service or responding to a request for services, and the second party acknowledges, typically by voice and entry in a formal log.

2.4.1 *Discussion*—Check-in occurs when an individual ESU contacts the responding ESU, or when the ESU or ESV contacts the requesting legal authority. Members of an ESU will typically be checked-in by the ESU upon first verification of their response to the call-out, either in person at a rendezvous point or search base, by radio, or other means dictated by the type of response. The ESU will typically check-in with the legal authority either at the incident site or search base, or by radio once it is mobilized appropriately to establish itself as ready for deployment to the incident. A GPEV is required to check-in at the response place designated for such volunteers, and to be marked as in service on the personnel log.

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F32 on Search and Rescue and is the direct responsibility of F32.02 on Management and Operations.

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2.5 *check-out*—the process by which one party notifies a second that it is concluding its on-site services, and the second party acknowledges, typically by voice and entry in a formal log.

2.5.1 *Discussion*—Check-out occurs when contact is made between the on-site agency and the ESV or ESU to notify either entity that their services are being withdrawn from the activity. Members of an ESU will typically be checked-out by the ESU upon the termination of the individual's service pursuant to their response to the call-out, either in person at the point of demobilization, at a rendezvous point or search base, by radio, or other means dictated by the type of response. The ESU will typically check-out with the legal authority either at the incident site or search base, or by radio once it is prepared appropriately to establish itself as ready for check-out and demobilization from the incident. A GPEV is required to check-out at the same check-in place for designated for such volunteers, and to be marked as out of service on the incident personnel log.

2.6 *community education*—activities generated by the ESU to contact the public to increase the awareness and preparedness of the public in areas of preventative search and rescue (PSAR), fire prevention, medical and disaster preparedness, and survival.

2.7 *demobilization*—the activity of an ESU or ESV as required to return from a call-out to the point of origin or to a non service-related stop enroute home or to the point of origin of the ESU or ESV after having been relieved of duty by the requesting legal authority.

2.7.1 *Discussion*—Demobilization typically includes equipment retrieval, mission debriefing, personnel review, and travel from the incident site or search base to an equipment cache, station, or vehicle readiness area to return the vehicles and equipment to a condition of readiness for the next call-out.

2.8 *emergency services*—any activity requiring an increased level of urgency in the rendering of assistance to the entity requesting such assistance.

2.8.1 *Discussion*—For the purposes of this practice, emergency services are defined as those related to search and rescue, fire suppression, medical and disaster services.

2.9 *emergency services unit (ESU)*—an individual, or a collection of individuals forming an association, organization, group, team, or similar resource organized or volunteering to provide search and/or rescue, fire or other emergency service activity for a responsible agency. An individual or other single resource may be considered a unit if the service can be appropriately rendered (for example, a dog handler or tracker, air search volunteer, or emergency manager).

2.9.1 *Discussion*—An emergency services unit operates within a formal division of the legal authority as a recognized unit of the legal authority or agency, and is organized and recognized by that agency as a resource of its emergency and disaster services general plan. Such a unit is expected to adopt a training program sufficient to maintain a skill level equal to or greater than recognized national standards or as acceptable to the agency requesting their services, and will typically engage in community education programs. Other examples of

an ESU include, but are not limited to, volunteer search and rescue units, volunteer emergency medical squads, volunteer fire fighters, or designated civilian volunteers who have formed organized and trained groups and who serve their city, county, or state agency in the performance of their services.

2.10 *emergency services volunteer (ESV)*—an individual who volunteers his/her services to, and whose services are accepted by, an agency in response to a request for an emergency function for which no substantive monetary benefit is expected or received. The legal authority incurs workers' compensation insurance responsibility for emergency services volunteers (ESVs) while the ESV is actively providing services to the agency as defined in Section 5 of this practice. This period of activity shall be considered to be employment as defined by the workers' compensation statutes in the state in which the agency exists.

2.10.1 *Discussion*—Emergency services volunteers are presumed to be requested irregularly to provide special skills or assistance on behalf of the agency. As such, these volunteers act as part-time employees of the agency and are empowered to act to provide these services when specifically requested to do so, or pursuant to an approved plan or schedule, or under the supervision of a full-time employee.

2.10.2 *search and rescue volunteer*—an individual who volunteers his/her services in the performance of searches and/or rescues, with the accompanying training proficiency. In addition to those specifically described in this practice, this definition may be applied to air, ground, or water search volunteers, search dog specialists, and emergency managers, and others not included by specific reference.

2.10.3 *volunteer firefighter*—an individual who volunteers his/her services in the performance of fire suppression activities, with the accompanying training proficiency.

2.10.4 *emergency medical services (EMS) volunteer*—an individual who volunteers his/her services in the performance of emergency medical services, with the accompanying training proficiency.

2.10.5 *disaster services volunteer*—an individual who volunteers his/her services to an agency upon a request for services upon the occurrence of an emergency or disaster, under the direct supervision of the agency, and with the appropriate training activity.

2.11 *general public emergency volunteer (GPEV)*—an individual who volunteers his/her services, and whose services are accepted, in response to a request to the public for emergency assistance.

2.11.1 *Discussion*—A GPEV is typically not a member of an organized emergency services unit, nor responding to a call for such organized units. An example of a GPEV is an individual who is contacted pursuant to a radio or television broadcast for the assistance of the general public with instructions to respond to a search base to assist in a search operation.

2.12 *legal authority (agency)*—the individual or government agency given responsibility and authority for search, rescue, fire, and other emergency or disaster services by statute. Where multiple, concurrent or overlapping authorities exist, the term is used to refer to the legal authority ultimately