

Effective 5/7/2025

Superseded 7/1/2026

53-2a-1102 Search and Rescue Financial Assistance Program -- Uses -- Rulemaking -- Distribution.

- (1) As used in this section:
 - (a) "Assistance card program" means the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program created within this section.
 - (b) "Card" means the Search and Rescue Assistance Card issued under this section to a participant.
 - (c) "Participant" means an individual, family, or group who is registered pursuant to this section as having a valid card at the time search, rescue, or both are provided.
 - (d) "Program" means the Search and Rescue Financial Assistance Program created within this section.
 - (e)
 - (i) "Reimbursable base expenses" means those reasonable expenses incidental to search and rescue activities.
 - (ii) "Reimbursable base expenses" include:
 - (A) rental for fixed wing aircraft, snowmobiles, boats, and generators;
 - (B) replacement and upgrade of search and rescue equipment;
 - (C) training of search and rescue volunteers;
 - (D) costs of providing life insurance and workers' compensation benefits for volunteer search and rescue team members under Section 67-20-7.5; and
 - (E) any other equipment or expenses necessary or appropriate for conducting search and rescue activities.
 - (iii) "Reimbursable base expenses" do not include any salary or overtime paid to an individual on a regular or permanent payroll, including permanent part-time employees of any agency of the state.
 - (f) "Rescue" means search services, rescue services, or both search and rescue services.
- (2) There is created the Search and Rescue Financial Assistance Program within the division.
- (3)
 - (a) The financial program and the assistance card program shall be funded from the following revenue sources:
 - (i) any voluntary contributions to the state received for search and rescue operations;
 - (ii) money received by the state under Subsection (11) and under Sections 23A-4-209, 41-22-34, and 73-18-24;
 - (iii) money deposited under Section 59-12-103 as a dedicated credit for the sole use of the Search and Rescue Financial Assistance Program;
 - (iv) contributions deposited in accordance with Section 41-1a-230.7; and
 - (v) appropriations made to the program by the Legislature.
 - (b) Money received from the revenue sources in Subsections (3)(a)(i), (ii), and (iv), and 90% of the money described in Subsection (3)(a)(iii), shall be deposited into the General Fund as a dedicated credit to be used solely for the program.
 - (c) Ten percent of the money described in Subsection (3)(a)(iii) shall be deposited into the General Fund as a dedicated credit to be used solely to promote the assistance card program.
 - (d) Funding for the program is nonlapsing.

- (4) Subject to Subsections (3)(b) and (c), the director shall use the money described in this section to reimburse counties for all or a portion of each county's reimbursable base expenses for search and rescue operations, subject to:
 - (a) the approval of the Search and Rescue Advisory Board as provided in Section 53-2a-1104;
 - (b) money available in the program; and
 - (c) rules made under Subsection (7).
- (5) Money described in Subsection (3) may not be used to reimburse for any paid personnel costs or paid man hours spent in emergency response and search and rescue related activities.
- (6) The Legislature finds that these funds are for a general and statewide public purpose.
- (7) The division, with the approval of the Search and Rescue Advisory Board, shall make rules in accordance with Title 63G, Chapter 3, Utah Administrative Rulemaking Act, and consistent with this section:
 - (a) specifying the costs that qualify as reimbursable base expenses;
 - (b) defining the procedures of counties to submit expenses and be reimbursed;
 - (c) defining a participant in the assistance card program, including:
 - (i) individuals; and
 - (ii) families and organized groups who qualify as participants;
 - (d) defining the procedure for issuing a card to a participant;
 - (e) defining excluded expenses that may not be reimbursed under the program, including medical expenses;
 - (f) establishing the card renewal cycle for the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program;
 - (g) establishing the frequency of review of the fee schedule;
 - (h) providing for the administration of the program; and
 - (i) providing a formula to govern the distribution of available money among the counties for uncompensated search and rescue expenses based on:
 - (i) the total qualifying expenses submitted;
 - (ii) the number of search and rescue incidents per county population;
 - (iii) the number of victims that reside outside the county; and
 - (iv) the number of volunteer hours spent in each county in emergency response and search and rescue related activities per county population.
- (8)
 - (a) The division shall, in consultation with the Division of Outdoor Recreation, establish the fee schedule of the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program under Subsection 63J-1-504(9).
 - (b) The division shall provide a discount of not less than 10% of the card fee under Subsection (8)(a) to a person who has paid a fee under Section 23A-4-209, 41-22-34, or 73-18-24 during the same calendar year in which the person applies to be a participant in the assistance card program.
- (9) Counties may not bill reimbursable base expenses to an individual for costs incurred for the rescue of an individual, if the individual is a current participant in the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program at the time of rescue, unless:
 - (a) the rescuing county finds that the participant acted recklessly in creating a situation resulting in the need for the county to provide rescue services; or
 - (b) the rescuing county finds that the participant intentionally created a situation resulting in the need for the county to provide rescue services.
- (10)

- (a) There is created the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program. The program is located within the division.
 - (b) The program may not be used to cover any expenses, such as medically related expenses, that are not reimbursable base expenses related to the rescue.
- (11)
- (a) To participate in the program, a person shall purchase a search and rescue assistance card from the division by paying the fee as determined by the division in Subsection (8).
 - (b) The money generated by the fees shall be deposited into the General Fund as a dedicated credit for the Search and Rescue Financial Assistance Program created in this section.
 - (c) Participation and payment of fees by a person under Sections 23A-4-209, 41-22-34, and 73-18-24 do not constitute purchase of a card under this section.
- (12) The division shall consult with the Division of Outdoor Recreation regarding:
- (a) administration of the assistance card program; and
 - (b) outreach and marketing strategies.
- (13) Pursuant to Subsection 31A-1-103(7), the Utah Search and Rescue Assistance Card Program under this section is exempt from being considered insurance as that term is defined in Section 31A-1-301.

Amended by Chapter 277, 2025 General Session
Amended by Chapter 357, 2025 General Session
Amended by Chapter 452, 2025 General Session