5-06/050.00 - Search or Rescue Operations

It shall be the responsibility of the concerned station/unit to initiate and carry out any search or rescue operation in its entirety. In conjunction with this responsibility, the station/unit shall use the Emergency Services Detail (ESD), qualified reserve personnel, and all resources (Department and other) that the Department has at its disposal. (Refer to EOP 2-7 for additional operational guidelines.)

THE MOBILIZATION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE PERSONNEL SHALL NOT BE DELAYED BY DISPATCHING PATROL UNITS TO CONFIRM CIRCUMSTANCES.

In all search and rescue incidents where injuries are suspected, the county fire department shall be notified immediately.

When a request for search and rescue is received, the concerned station/unit shall immediately contact the Emergency Services Detail and advise them of the conditions. The station/unit shall be guided by ESD's recommendations regarding the level of response. ESD will consider the potential life threat due to circumstantial hazards such as extreme weather; the victim's age; and physical, mental, and medical condition.

Whenever a search and rescue operation is initiated, the Emergency Services Detail shall respond. If multiple calls for service occur, the ESD on-duty Sergeant shall prioritize the calls and allocate resources based on the best available information. Every effort will be made to respond to all calls.

When a search or rescue operation is initiated, the station/unit watch commander shall be responsible for assuming command or designating an alternate who shall be a regular deputy of this Department to act as incident commander. Emergency Services Detail personnel may perform in this role.

The incident commander shall be responsible for:

- Confirming that the fire department has been notified when injuries are suspected;
- Instituting search and rescue operations;
- Alerting the Emergency Services Detail, which shall respond to all search and rescue incidents;
- Requesting response by Aero Bureau (in all instances where search and rescue is initiated, a helicopter shall be requested);
- Initiating a response by the station's/unit’s search and rescue personnel;
- Requesting assistance and additional personnel or equipment as circumstances dictate;
- Use of the Incident Command System to whatever level is required by the incident (refer to EOP 1-2 for additional guidelines); and
- Assigning an air operations deputy when aircraft are responding from any agency (the air operations officer shall be a regular deputy from the Emergency Services Detail or Aero Bureau).