



# King County Explorer Search & Rescue Code of Conduct

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King County Explorer Search & Rescue (ESAR) and its members proudly serve the communities of King County and Washington State. We strive for excellence in the search and rescue services that we provide and we highly value the opportunities that our training and operations offer for the personal and professional growth of our members.

Serving the community as a registered state emergency worker is a privilege. All ESAR Members are expected to conduct themselves professionally and in accordance with the guidelines set forth in this Code of Conduct. This expectation extends to personal conduct outside of the unit, including on social media platforms, where so far as the member may be recognized as a representative of the organization. Failure to meet this requirement may result in disciplinary action, up to and including revocation of membership.

This Code of Conduct is intended to serve as a guideline and is subject to change at any time. Issues which may not be specifically covered in this document should be addressed by the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees as appropriate, according to ESAR's bylaws. Members are responsible for periodically reviewing this document on [kcesar.org](http://kcesar.org).

## Oversight

ESAR operates under the direction and control of the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) and the State of Washington Department of emergency Management (DEM). Members must observe all applicable KCSO and DEM operation protocols. You can learn more at [emd.wa.gov](http://emd.wa.gov).

ESAR is affiliated with Learning for Life (LFL), a subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), and maintains an Explorer Post which facilitates our youth program. During Post activities and training events that take place on BSA property ESAR must adhere to LFL policies and procedures. You can learn more at [learningforlife.org](http://learningforlife.org).

ESAR is affiliated with the YMCA of Greater Seattle which supports our high school members and facilitates certain outdoor and leadership development activities for our teen members. During these activities members must adhere to YMCA of Greater Seattle policies and practices.

During training and mission activities Members must follow all federal, state and local laws, guidelines and regulations including traffic regulations. Speeding, negligent or reckless driving will not be tolerated.

The Federal Communications Commission has strict rules regarding the operation and use of radios. Members must observe proper radio protocol at all times, which may include obtaining an amateur radio operator license.

Members are responsible for keeping their contact information current with ESAR.

## Standard Conduct

ESAR is widely recognized as a leader in search and rescue. We are King County's primary ground search and rescue resource and our highly skilled volunteers are frequently called upon state-wide to provide mutual aid. This reputation is a reflection of the professionalism and integrity of our Members. It is paramount that we act in good faith and treat each other, those we help, and the organizations with whom we coordinate with respect, courtesy, and fairness.

All ESAR Members have the personal obligation to protect ESAR's reputation by conducting themselves according to the highest ethical, moral and legal standards. Volunteers should use good judgment in spending ESAR funds, and

safeguarding ESAR materials and equipment. You are accountable for reporting illegal or unethical conduct that you know has occurred, or is about to occur, to a member of the Board.

Members should use ESAR equipment only when authorized and according to the training that they have received. All equipment must be returned in good condition, ready to be deployed. Lost or damaged equipment should be reported immediately to the Operations Leader or Training Director of the activity.

## Equal Opportunity

ESAR does not allow discrimination based on religion, race, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or political affiliation. If you feel that you have been discriminated against or harassed or witnessed this conduct, you should promptly report the incident to the Operations Leader or Training Director of the activity, or to any member of the Board of Directors or Board of Trustees to whom you feel comfortable reporting your concerns. These individuals are responsible for initiating an investigation in accordance with ESAR's bylaws.

## Harassment

Any type of discrimination, prejudice or harassment, including but not limited to that which is based on age, sex, race, color, creed, physical or mental handicap, and/or on any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, by or against any of its members, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any member who believes they are the subject of such discrimination, prejudice or harassment should report their concerns to a member of the Board of Directors. No member shall be subjected to retaliatory action of any kind for bringing such matters to the Board's attention.

Behaviors such as conditioning advancement, awards, training or other benefits upon acceptance of actions of a sexual nature, or situations creating an intimidating, hostile, or abusive environment, are not tolerated. Sexual Harassment may include sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The victim can be of the same gender as the harasser.

Other examples of actions that may create an intimidating, hostile, or abusive environment include but are not limited to:

- Hazing, bullying, or verbal abuse
- Repeated pranks, teasing, jokes, gestures, or innuendo
- Touching or grabbing of a sexual nature
- Repeatedly asking a person to socialize during off-duty hours when the person has said no or has indicated they are not interested
- Unwanted gifts, items, or favors
- Stalking

## Conflict of Interest

ESAR members should generally avoid situations where they may be required to make decisions that would be, or could be perceived to be, influenced by a personal benefit or financial interest or a romantic or family relationship. These situations create a conflict of interest, which can potentially compromise trust, team cohesion, and member safety.

A conflict of interest may exist if a decision regarding membership, advancement, training opportunities, awards, or other benefits, would be made by a member who has a romantic or family relationship with the beneficiary. As such, they are required to disclose the potential conflict to the Board of Directors who will decide how to proceed.

A conflict of interest may exist on a mission if a member has a personal, romantic, or family relationship with the subject; or is the subject or a witness of a criminal investigation related to the mission. As such, they are required to disclose the potential conflict to the Operations Leader before participating. A conflict of interest may not prohibit the member from participating, however it is at the discretion of the Operations Leader how to proceed.

A conflict of interest may exist if a member is the decision maker for any activity relating to the business operations of ESAR through which they, or someone with whom they have a romantic or family relationship, may have an undisclosed financial interest. Such potential conflicts must be disclosed to the Board of Directors who will decide how to proceed.

## Safety

Search and rescue activities involve inherent risks. Members are responsible ensuring their own safety as well as that of their team, the public, and the subject. It is each Member's duty to report safety concerns to the appropriate leadership depending on the activity that they are engaged in. Members must observe safety protocols at all times and use safety equipment when appropriate and as trained and directed; only participate in activities for which they are trained and feel comfortable performing; self-limit where appropriate due to mental or physical wellness.

Injuries that occur during mission or training activities, or while in transit to such, must be reported to the Operations Leader or Training Director and documented in the activity log.

## Appropriate Dress and Attire

ESAR members are expected to present a professional demeanor and appearance which reflects positively on the unit, contributes to the morale and collegiality of all members, and provides assurance to rescue subjects, their families, responsible authorities, the press and the general public. Subject to the exigencies of missions, members shall strive to maintain professional attire and appearance and to dress according to the requirements of training or mission activities. When on search and rescue missions, members are encouraged to wear ESAR shirts and jackets to present a uniform appearance.

## Drug Free Environment

The use of illegal drugs, marijuana, alcohol, smoking and vaping are prohibited during any ESAR activity. Members should not respond to a mission if they are currently under the influence of any drug, including prescription drugs or over-the-counter medicine, which may cause drowsiness or otherwise impair their ability to safely participate.

ESAR maintains the right to conduct drug or alcohol tests upon reasonable suspicion of use or impairment in the course of or while participating in any official ESAR activity or after an accident.

## Firearms & Weapons

No Trustee, Officer or Member of ESAR may carry any firearm or weapon on or during any official activity of ESAR for which a DEM mission number has been issued. For this purpose, tools reasonably required for personal survival or rescue purposes are not considered firearms or weapons, including, for example, brush tools, flare guns, fixed blade and folding knives, and rope launchers.

## Public Engagement

### Privacy and Information Security

KCSO operates under many laws and regulations governing the distribution of information related to missions. When you participate in a mission, you are bound by the same restrictions.

Members of ESAR may become privy to information about the unit or its mission activity that is confidential. We are entrusted with this information because it is critical to our ability to effectively participate in training or mission activity. Examples include, but are not limited to: the address, coordinates, or other geographic description of subject, staging, or other operational locations; information regarding a subject's personal health or medical history; personally identifiable information about our fellow responders. We may also be provided, or obtain through the course of completing assignments prescribed by the Operations Leader or the Incident Commander, certain media such as photographs in digital

or printed formats, video, or audio recordings. Improper use or disclosure of confidential information or media may result in personal legal risk, in addition to disciplinary actions that may be exercised within the unit.

- a) Missions: Treat mission details as confidential. The King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) will coordinate communication with the media. Refer any requests for information to the Incident Commander.
- b) Criminal Investigations: KCSO is subject to very strict rules regarding information discovered during a criminal investigation. If you participate in an evidence search or other criminal investigation, do not disclose the information you learned. Refer any requests for information or questions to the Incident Commander.
- c) Subjects: Respect the privacy of the subject of a mission and others. Do not share the subject's information except as needed for the subject's medical care or to protect responders. Do not take photos or video of a subject unless you have been directed to do so by the KCSO SAR Coordinator.

Members should refer to the KCSO SAR Photograph Policy for additional information regarding proper handling of video and photographic media during mission activities.

### Media Inquiries

Only those Members authorized by the Board of Directors have the authority to speak for and act on behalf of ESAR. Media inquiries should be directed to the Incident Commander or to ESAR's Public Information Officer.

### Speaking at Public Forums

No member of ESAR may speak at a public forum as a representative of ESAR without the prior approval of the ESAR president or the board. In the case that Members may be presenting or speaking about their personal experiences in search and rescue in a public forum a verbal or written disclaimer may be appropriate:

*"I AM HERE ONLY IN MY INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY AND ANY STATEMENT (OR RESPONSE) I MAKE REPRESENTS SOLELY MY OWN OPINION AND MAY NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF KING COUNTY EXPLORER SEARCH AND RESCUE."*