

Mountain Rescue Association Rocky Mountain Region

Article X Policy 1

Accreditation Policies

Accreditation in the region can be in one of the three membership categories as defined in the MRA bylaws: Regular Member Units (RMU), Associate Member Units (AMU), and Ex-Officio Member Units (EMU).

- RMUs are fully accredited teams that have successfully passed the A/R exercise in all three skill areas as defined by the MRA bylaws.
- AMUs can obtain partial accreditation by successfully passing the A/R exercise in any one or two skill areas as defined by the MRA bylaws.
- EMUs can be fully accredited teams that have successfully passed the A/R exercise in all three skill areas as defined by the MRA bylaws or can obtain partial accreditation by successfully passing the A/R exercise in any one or two skill areas as defined by the MRA bylaws.

Introduction

Member teams need a common set of skills: when one team is called to assist another, it must effectively integrate into the operation, providing an asset rather than a liability. The Rocky Mountain Region's accreditation / reaccreditation (A/R) exercise tests teams to a minimum level of competency. These are full team scenarios because effective mountain rescue requires teamwork. These scenarios represent the common types of calls mountain rescue teams in the Rocky Mountain Region encounter. The primary factor in all of these scenarios is safety. Teams must appropriately balance effectiveness, efficiency, and safety.

Teams are tested in three skill areas as defined in the MRA bylaws: Search, Technical Rock Rescue and Technical Snow and Ice Rescue. The Rocky Mountain Region has subdivided technical rock rescue into two scenarios, scree and high angle. The Rocky Mountain Region has also subdivided technical snow and ice rescue into two scenarios, technical evacuation and avalanche. Teams must pass both scenarios in technical rock rescue and technical snow and ice rescue to be accredited in the skill area. A tabletop scenario is also required for those teams going through their initial A/R exercise.

An A/R exercise in the Rocky Mountain Region is defined as the testing of all five (5) of the following scenarios listed below when applicable. Teams retesting shall be tested in all scenarios' that have not been previously passed.

- Technical Rock - scree scenario
- Technical Rock - high angle scenario.
- Winter Rescue - technical evacuation scenario
- Winter Rescue - avalanche scenario.
- Search – field scenario
- Search - tabletop/oral scenario - this is only required when a team takes their initial A/R exercise

Membership Classification and Recommendations to National MRA

The national MRA retains full responsibility for classifying member teams. The following policy applies to teams that are accrediting for the first time, or to teams that have lost their accreditation and are attempting to establish new accreditation. These decisions are made by a simple majority vote of the full membership at national meetings based upon recommendations made by the regions.

The Rocky Mountain Region will make recommendations in accordance with the following criteria:

- All recommendations based upon A/R exercises undertaken in the previous year will be made at the winter MRA national meeting.
- Teams that have successfully passed the A/R exercise in all three skill areas will be recommended to be a RMU or fully accredited EMU. Teams approved by the National MRA as a RMU or EMU will receive an “Accreditation Certificate” signed by the Regional Vice Chairperson and the Lead Evaluator for their A/R Exercise.
- If a partially accredited team successfully completes a skill area that will add an accreditation area, a recommendation will be made each time a new area is completed. If a team in adding accredited areas passes all three skill areas, thus allowing them to become a RMU or fully accredited EMU, the appropriate recommendation will be made.
- Teams that have successfully completed a portion of the A/R exercise will be recommended to be AMUs or EMUs accredited in the skill areas in which they have successfully completed.
- Teams who have not successfully completed any of the skill areas in the A/R exercise will be recommended to be non-accredited AMUs or EMUs.

Reaccreditation Reporting to National MRA

The Rocky Mountain Region will make reports to the National MRA in accordance with the following Criteria

- All reports based upon A/R exercises undertaken in the previous year will be made at the winter MRA national meeting. In the event a six month extension is granted to a team by the Regional Board of Directors, a report for this extension will be made at the winter MRA national meeting. Reports based upon the result of any A/R exercise undertaken during the provided extension will be made at the summer MRA national meeting.
- Teams that have successfully passed the A/R exercise in all three skill areas will be reported to the National MRA Membership Chair as being renewed as an RMU or fully accredited EMU for five more years. Teams successfully renewing their reaccreditation as a RMU or EMU will receive an “Accreditation Certificate” signed by the Regional Vice Chairperson and the Lead Evaluator for their A/R Exercise.

Scheduling

Teams accredited in any of the three skill areas are required to undergo an A/R exercise every five years. Teams with partial accreditation can request to only be tested in the areas that they are currently accredited in or can take the A/R exercise in all three skill areas. The renewal date for every team will be December 31st of the fifth year after the region makes its initial recommendation for accreditation to the MRA.

Once a team is accredited, the A/R renewal schedule for that team will be every five years from the year they became accredited. In the event of a team changing its membership status, or a sixth month extension is granted for an A/R exercise in the sixth year, the renewal dates will remain the same.

A six month extension for an A/R exercise can only be granted in the case of a scheduled A/R exercise being cancelled due to weather or circumstances beyond the control of the applicant team. A recommendation for a six month extension for an A/R exercise into the sixth year must be approved by a simple majority vote of the Regional Board of Directors.

The Regional Vice Chairperson (RVC) will coordinate the schedule for each year with the goal of evenly spreading out the regional A/R exercises. First priority in the scheduling will go to those teams seeking reaccreditation and are in their fifth year of the five year renewal period. Second priority will go to those teams seeking reaccreditation and are in their fourth year of the five year renewal period. Third priority will go to those teams seeking their initial accreditation.

Teams wishing to take an A/R exercise in any year must notify the Regional Board of Directors before the previous year's winter regional meeting. Prior to scheduling any A/R exercise, the applicant Team must submit to the RVC a letter stating that they continue to meet all of the Membership Qualifications as stated in MRA Policy 101. Scheduling of all A/R exercises will be the responsibility of the RVC and will be performed via coordination of all the teams scheduled to take the A/R Exercise in a given year. The RVC will also coordinate the scheduling of a current member of the Board of Directors to attend each A/R exercise. This person's function will be to act as a resource to the Lead Evaluator in helping to ensure realistic scenarios, objective evaluation criteria and fair and balanced dialogue during the evaluator sessions. This person will also help to communicate the importance of the A/R process and associated standards of professionalism to all in attendance at the exercise. After the schedule is negotiated and agreed upon by all the teams taking part in the A/R exercises in that year, the RVC will notify the remaining region teams in a timely manner. This notification will include the name of the Board of Director member attending each exercise.

The impact on the region's teams and members of the A/R exercise process must be balanced with the desire of any one team to test on a preferred schedule. For these reasons the following requirements are placed on region teams.

- Teams may request to take the A/R exercise no more than three times within the five year renewal period starting from their initial accreditation exercise. Teams may only take the A/R exercise two times in any one calendar year.
- If the region recommends a change in status from a RMU or fully accredited EMU to an AMU or partially accredited EMU, that team will not be allowed to take the A/R exercise for one calendar year from their last renewal date. After the one year period they will be able to take the A/R exercise in the skill area(s) that they did not pass. This A/R exercise will count as one of their three tests within their next five year renewal period. If they do not pass this A/R exercise, they will remain as an AMU or partially accredited EMU until their next scheduled A/R exercise when they will have the opportunity to take the A/R exercise in all three skill areas.

A/R Exercises - Evaluation Team

The Evaluation Team will consist of a Lead Evaluator, Scenario Leaders and Evaluators that are current members of teams in good standing in the Rocky Mountain Region of the MRA. At a minimum, the

Evaluation Team for each of the scenarios shall consist of at least five evaluators who represent at least three region teams.

If requested by the applicant team, in order to reduce the number of members on the Evaluation Team, the Lead Evaluator can count each of the five Scenario Leaders as one of the two evaluators that each team is allowed to send each day and/or ask individual teams to voluntarily give up their two evaluators positions for this A/R exercise. Only members of RMUs and fully accredited EMUs in good standing can fill the position of Lead Evaluator. Scenario Leaders and Evaluators must be members of teams accredited in those skill areas that they are evaluating.

- **Lead Evaluator:** The RVC will appoint the Lead Evaluators for all A/R exercises held during their term in office. (When a person is serving in this position for the first time, the RVC will assign another Lead Evaluator (mentor), who has served in this position at least twice, to assist this person. The Lead Evaluator must be, at a minimum, a current MRA rescue level member with the skills and capabilities as defined in the MRA Policy 105.C, endorsed by their team and been a member of a Rocky Mountain Region team for at least five years. They must have incident management experience and training as well as have participated in at least three A/R exercises (not including their own teams) in the past five years. They must have served as a Lead Evaluator, Scenario Leader or mentor at an A/R exercise at least once in the past three years. The Lead Evaluator will appoint five Scenario Leaders that represent at least three different Rocky Mountain Region teams. The Lead Evaluator will coordinate and oversee the approval process of each written scenario by the five Scenario Leaders at each A/R Exercise. The Lead Evaluator is discouraged from voting but is permitted to do so in cases in which it is necessary.
- **Scenario Leaders:** Each Scenario Leader must be, at a minimum, a current MRA rescue level member with the skills and capabilities as defined in the MRA Policy 105.C, endorsed by their team and been a member of a Rocky Mountain Region team for at least three years. When a person is serving in this position for the first time, the Lead Evaluator will assign another Scenario Leader (mentor), who has previously served in this position in the past five years, to assist this person. They must also have participated in at least two A/R exercises (not including their own teams) in the past three years, at least one of which was as an evaluator or mentor. Members from Rocky Mountain Region teams that have partial accreditation may only serve as Scenario Leaders in those areas in which they are accredited. Scenario Leaders must provide written scenarios to the Lead Evaluator prior to the exercise for approval. Prior to all A/R exercises, the written scenarios must also be approved by at least three of the Scenario Leaders participating at that A/R exercise. At the end of the A/R exercise, scenario descriptions and summaries will be included in the regional records. Scenario Leaders are required to fill out the A/R worksheets for all scenarios that they observed as well as participate in the scenario critiques at the end of each day.
- **Evaluators:** A RMU or fully accredited EMU may send a maximum of two evaluators per day (not per scenario) and each evaluator shall have one vote per scenario that they evaluate during that day. All voting evaluators shall be identified each morning prior to the scenarios. Each RMU or fully accredited EMU may have different evaluators each day as long as this does not create a housing burden for the host team and the evaluators are identified each morning. AMUs/EMUs with partial accreditation may send a maximum of two evaluators per day only for the areas in which they are accredited. Each evaluator must be, at a minimum, a current MRA rescue level member with the skills and capabilities as defined in the MRA Policy 105.C, endorsed by their team and have been a member of a Rocky Mountain Region team for at least three years. They must also have participated in at least one A/R exercise (either as an observer or mentor or with their own teams A/R exercise) in the past three years. At the beginning of each day the Lead Evaluator must be notified as to who will be the voting evaluators for that day's scenarios. Evaluators are required to fill out the A/R

worksheets for all scenarios that they observed as well as participate in the scenario critiques at the end of each day.

- **Mentors:** Mentors are required for first time Lead Evaluators and Scenario Leads. The role of each Mentor is to: ensure that the scenarios are as realistic as possible: ensure the scenarios and the entire A/R Exercise is consistent with the Region Guidelines: review, evaluate and make suggestions, if needed, to the individuals performing the roles of Lead Evaluator and Scenario Leaders.

A/R Exercises - Observers

At the discretion of the Lead Evaluator and applicant team, members from any Region teams or other agencies, (that have approval from their team or agency operation leader) may be invited to be observers. Observers that attend the A/R exercises are not involved in the evaluation process of the applicant team and should provide their observations to members of the Evaluation Team or to their team's evaluators for potential incorporation into critiques. They are encouraged, but not required, to fill out the A/R worksheets to gain experience with this form. They do not have a vote.

A/R Exercises – Liaison

- **Liaison:** (single point of contact – administrative function) The Team seeking reaccreditation shall designate one of their members as the liaison to work with the Lead Evaluator throughout the A/R process. While it is desirable that this liaison be a rescue level member, it is not required. The liaison must be endorsed by their Team.

A/R Exercises - General Requirements

The A/R exercise is normally held over a 2-3 day period. Prior to the A/R exercise, the liaison from the team seeking accreditation and the Lead Evaluator (assigned by the RVC) will mutually agree upon the sites for each of the scenarios. It is recommended that the two technical rock scenarios and two winter rescue scenarios not occur on the same day. The search scenario will be held on either day at the discretion of the Lead Evaluator. (When applicable, the tabletop scenario will be held at a time mutually agreed upon by the applicant team and the Evaluation Team.)

At the conclusion of each day's exercise, the Evaluation Team will meet to discuss the day's scenarios, determine whether or not the team seeking accreditation has met the requirements for those skill areas performed and then hold a critique of the day's events with that team.

Other Requirements:

- The Evaluation Team should strive to provide the highest level of professionalism throughout the A/R exercise.
- The scenarios for testing will be set up by the Evaluation Team. The Lead Evaluator and Scenario Leaders will inform the (applicant) team being accredited of the situation and the ground rules.
- The scenarios should be as realistic as possible within the parameters of a typical mountain rescue mission.

- Safety of the individuals playing the roles of scenario subjects may require the use of additional equipment in the scenario that could cause confusion for the team seeking accreditation. Any such safety equipment must be clearly marked with a system agreed upon prior to the start of the A/R tests by the Lead Evaluator and the Liaison from the team seeking accreditation, and this system must be conveyed to all participants during the briefings for each day/scenario.
- Role-playing of scenario subjects shall not inappropriately distract from the primary purpose of evaluating the technical competence of the team seeking accreditation.
- Prior to the A/R exercise, the Lead Evaluator and the applicant team will discuss scenario options. While scenarios will normally be conducted separately, the applicant team may be granted the option of conducting A/R scenarios simultaneously or in close succession. This will be at the applicant team's discretion only. All decisions about scenario options will be conveyed to all participants during the briefings for each day/scenario.
- The Lead Evaluator and applicant team will discuss how specific required skills will be demonstrated to the Evaluation Team. Discussion should include the applicant team protocols, and whether or not the required skills will be demonstrated within the context of the A/R scenarios or separately. All decisions about specific required skills will be conveyed to all participants during the briefings for each day/scenario.
- The Evaluation Team must agree upon the location and nature of any imaginary obstacles. These obstacles shall be clearly marked and identified with a system agreed upon prior to the start of the A/R exercises by the Lead Evaluator and the Liaison from the team seeking accreditation, and then explained to everyone before the scenario begins.
- During the scenario, changes can only be made by the Lead Evaluator or the Scenario Leader for that scenario.
- At each site or location where the team being evaluated is to perform significant required tasks, evaluators from at least two different teams shall be present.
- The Evaluation Team should observe from a sufficient distance so as to leave the work area open for use by the team seeking accreditation, but close enough to effectively observe real-time operation of the systems. Once the scenario is deemed ended by the Scenario Lead, any evaluator may request that all systems remain intact for inspection by the Evaluation Team; and it is at this time that evaluators can ask questions of the members of the team seeking accreditation. However, if an evaluator sees a safety issue that could have serious adverse consequences they can call an immediate halt to all activity while the issue is investigated by the Scenario Lead.
- The Lead Evaluator may remove any member of the Evaluation Team or applicant team from participation in the A/R exercise, if in their judgment, this person is a detriment to the A/R exercise.
- The Lead Evaluator will be responsible for providing safety guidelines for all members of the Evaluation Team.

Any concerns throughout the annual A/R process should be communicated to the Regional Board of Directors. Concerns can be submitted by the teams testing that year as well as by any member of the Evaluation Teams. The Region Board of Directors shall address all concerns in a timely fashion.

The teams tested each year are asked to submit the completed Rocky Mountain Region Evaluation Team Feedback Form to the Regional Vice Chairperson.

A/R Exercises - Scoring

The completed A/R worksheet from each evaluator will be provided to the Applicant as feedback on their performance in the specific scenarios. The signed Evaluator's Form from each evaluator, recording their pass or not pass vote, will be placed in the official Rocky Mountain Region records. Scoring will be in accordance with the following criteria:

- At the conclusion of each day's exercise, the Evaluators and Scenario Leaders vote either pass or not pass on those scenarios that they observed.
- A passing vote for each scenario is defined as at least a 2/3 majority of evaluators present and voting at that scenario;
- The vote as submitted by the Evaluation Team is final and shall be entered into the regional records.
- At the discretion of the Evaluation Team, portions of the A/R exercise may be re-tested during the same weekend. Any scenarios retested during this weekend will not count as an additional A/R exercise for that team.

Accreditation Procedures

The team seeking accreditation (Applicant) must be:

- A viable, functioning team (i.e. has been effectively and safely performing missions with the support of local governing authorities) which has been operating continuously as a search and rescue organization for a minimum of four years.
- A volunteer non-profit, public service organization, which does NOT charge for its services, except for Accredited Ex-Officio Teams.
- A team whose primary mission load occurs in a wilderness environment (i.e. beyond the trailhead).
- A team whose primary coverage area is not already served by an existing accredited MRA team

The team seeking accreditation must demonstrate proficiency in solving problems in the three skill areas along with a Search – tabletop/oral scenario with effective, efficient and safe techniques and with evidence of adequate numbers of trained active personnel to accomplish such a search or rescue on a routine basis. The areas evaluated in each scenario are listed in the Rocky Mountain Accreditation Packet.

Requirements

Prior to scheduling any field tests, the applicant team must have met all of the Membership Qualifications as stated in the MRA Policies 101. The applicant must complete all national requirements as outlined in MRA Policy 102 and submit them to the Regional Chairperson for review.

The applicant team must submit the required documents to the Regional Chairperson with at least five copies for the Regional Board of Directors. The Regional Board of Directors will review the applicant team's documents and make a determination whether to proceed with the A/R exercise. The required documents are as follows:

History / Description of the applicant team, including:

- When, how and why the team was organized.
- The team's need and role in the community.
- The team's primary area of operation and/or responsibility in relation to the Rocky Mountain Region of MRA.
- The working relationship and understandings between the applicant team and local governmental authorities.
- The working relationship and understandings between the applicant team and other MRA teams in the same area (if applicable).
- The team's method(s) of funding and financing for equipment and operations.
- Method of notification of the team and individual members for a mission.
- The team's scope of operations and types of missions, including areas of special skills or limitations.

Bylaws of the Organization, including:

- An organization chart showing the various positions of authority within the team and a brief description of the responsibilities of those positions.
- Membership requirements and standards for the team as well as any additional requirements for various levels of membership or positions of responsibility.
- Annual membership rosters for the past three years.
- Training schedules for the past three years.
- A list of missions with dates, places, type and man-hours for the past three years.
- A list of personal equipment, which is required to be obtained and carried by each member during missions.
- An inventory of team equipment listing the primary items that are owned and used by the team (not down to the last piton and/or bandage).
- Training manual or published training guidelines (if applicable and appropriate)

Sponsoring Team Recommendation:

Any team wishing to become accredited must have a sponsor from among the existing RMUs or fully accredited EMUs of the region. The sponsoring team acts as a "Mentor" for the applicant team. The duties of the sponsoring team include:

- Assisting the applicant team in understanding the three skill areas necessary to pass the A/R exercise.
- Mentoring the applicant team on the required documentation.
- Assisting the applicant team in understanding the requirements of the Search – tabletop/oral scenario.
- Notifying the Regional Chairperson promptly in the event that it cannot provide the recommendation for membership for the applicant or it desires to terminate its sponsorship of the applicant.
- Providing the Regional Board of Directors with a written recommendation for membership at least ninety days before the desired A/R exercise.

Reaccreditations Procedures

RMUs and EMUs seeking to become reaccredited will take the A/R exercise in all three skill areas but are not required to go through the Search - tabletop/oral scenario. AMUs and partially accredited EMUs seeking to become reaccredited will take the A/R exercise in the areas that they are currently accredited in or can take the complete A/R exercise in all three skill areas.

The team seeking reaccreditation must demonstrate proficiency in solving problems in the three different skill areas with proper and safe techniques and with evidence of adequate numbers of trained active personnel to accomplish such a search or rescue on a routine basis. The areas evaluated in each scenario are listed in the Rocky Mountain Reaccreditation Packet.

Prior to confirming the date of the A/R exercise, each team seeking reaccreditation must submit to the Regional Vice Chairperson a letter stating that they continue to meet the Membership Qualifications as stated in MRA Policy 101.

These policies have been approved and accepted by the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain Region of the Mountain Rescue Association on the date of _____.

Regional Chair: _____

Regional Vice-Chair: _____

Regional Secretary/Treasurer: _____

Regional Director at Large: _____

Regional Director at Large: _____

Amended on: 12/09/06
03/01/08
12/10/08
12/05/09
12/10/10
12/07/13
06/15/18