

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
Unit Accepted March 2026

ARTICLE I

TITLE

The name of this organization shall be Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit, herein after referred to as “the organization or the Unit.”

ARTICLE II

MISSION STATEMENT

The primary purpose of this organization is to plan, prepare, respond, recover, and evacuate during situations of missing persons, disaster, or any emergency the Sheriff’s Office calls the organization to request help. The Unit shall work in affiliation with state and local emergency management agencies utilizing the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS). The Unit shall be comprised of a network of trained and certified individual volunteers in vehicle-based operations. In addition, the Unit shall be a non-profit organization that is non-political, and non-partisan in character.

1. Objectives of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit:
 - a. To perform duties, but not limited to, vehicle road searches, evidence searches, and recoveries from wilderness to urban environments.
 - b. To provide technical support, equipment, and assistance when needed to other County search and rescue units, fire departments, and the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office or other law enforcement agencies. In addition, the organization may provide mutual aid assistance to other counties when requested through proper channels.
 - c. To provide assistance as directed during states of emergency, e.g. floods, inclement weather, fires, and other disasters under the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office.
 - d. To provide training classes and opportunities. The organization shall encourage attendance at additional outside trainings e.g. state conferences and other classes.
 - e. To promote community education through First Aid and CPR classes. Further, the organization shall participate in demonstrations of search and rescue techniques and outdoor safety throughout the community thereby promoting preventive Search and Rescue.

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
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ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP

1. Members:
 - a. All applicants and members are subject to regular background checks conducted by the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office.
 - b. Be at least 18 years of age.
 - c. Own a four-wheel drive vehicle or ATV approved by the Oral Board.
 - d. Hold a valid Washington State driver's license.
 - e. Have the minimum Washington State requirement for public liability and property damage insurance on any vehicle you respond in.
 - f. Hold a State of Washington Emergency Worker Identification Card issued by Whatcom County Emergency Management.
2. Governing Documents
 - a. All members are subject to the Unit By-Laws, the Units Membership Policy Guide, and any other applicable local, county, state, or federal regulations.
 - b. Members are also governed by the By-Laws and Policies of the Parent Organization, Whatcom County Search and Rescue Council.
3. Member Rights and Responsibilities
 - a. Each Member of the Unit, if in good standing, shall have the right to cast one vote on all actions for which Members shall have a right to vote. The right of a member to vote and all of his or her rights, title, and interest in or to the Unit shall cease on the termination of his membership.
 - b. Other rights and duties of each Member shall be as specified in the organization's Membership Policy Guide.
 - c. Turn in volunteer hours monthly as outlined in the Policies.
 - d. Turn in proof of outside training to Training Officers.
 - e. Members shall outfit themselves with personally owned equipment and consumables as outlined in the Membership Policy Guide. This equipment shall be the sole responsibility of the member.
 - f. No Member shall be entitled to share in the distribution of the organization assets in the event of the dissolution of the Unit.
4. Membership in the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit is a privilege which can be terminated at any time for violation of any rule, regulation policy, procedure or standard of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit. Such termination shall be executed by the Executive Board.

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
Unit Accepted March 2026

ARTICLE IV

OFFICERS AND DUTIES

1. Officers
 - a. Elected officers shall be the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, two training officers.
 - b. Appointed officers shall be the Equipment officer.
2. Election
 - a. Nominees must be a member in good standing.
 - b. Nominations will be made in October and November.
 - c. The officers of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit shall be elected by a simple majority of members in good standing in December of each year for a one (1) year term beginning on the first (1st) of January.
3. Duties of the Officers
 - a. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Organization, shall have general supervision over the affairs and property of the Organization and over its officers, and shall generally do and perform all acts pertaining to the office of President. The president shall conduct the meetings, appoint committees and shall appoint any member in good standing to fill a vacancy. They will also attend and have a voting voice for the Unit at the monthly WCSAR Council meetings.
 - b. The Vice President shall perform all the duties of the President at their request or in their absence or disability, and they will assist the president with their duties. They will be responsible for issuing and keeping track of Unit issued equipment. They shall also be responsible for the distribution of all stickers, hats, and patches. They shall be responsible for ordering (or authorizing purchase of) and distributing all SAR 4x4 clothing and accessories.
 - c. The secretary shall keep all personnel records, take minutes of all meetings and handle Search and Rescue correspondence. They will be responsible for maintaining the membership roster, assigning member Unit numbers, and turning in Unit and membership documentation to the WCSAR Council. They will also collect and total monthly volunteer hours turned in by members.
 - d. The treasurer shall have sole charge and custody of, and be responsible for, all the funds of the organization and shall keep, or cause to be kept, and shall be responsible for the keeping of, accurate and adequate records of the assets, liabilities and transactions of the organization. They shall be responsible for reporting to the secretary any donations so the secretary can carry out proper correspondence. They will provide a financial report at the monthly meetings. The report shall include the previous balance, any deposits or expenditures, with an ending balance. The treasurer will review the accounts with a Unit-approved accountant quarterly. In the event the treasurer is unavailable to perform their duties, an alternate shall be granted permission.

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
Unit Accepted March 2026

- e. The training officers are responsible for providing Search and Rescue related training at all monthly meetings. They are responsible for providing or organizing additional training in accordance with WCSAR Council requirements. They are also responsible for keeping track of training records, requesting and tracking training/mission numbers for all 4x4 activities. They will provide a report on each member's training status at least quarterly to the Unit membership.
 - f. Equipment Officer. The Equipment officer will be appointed by the president. They will be responsible for coordinating maintenance and repairs on all 4x4 Unit owned vehicles and equipment. They will work with the board to conduct an annual inventory.
4. Vacant Officer Positions
- a. If an elected officer does not serve an entire term, the President shall appoint a replacement for the remainder of that term, subject to confirmation by the Executive Board.
 - b. If the elected officer leaving is the President, the elected Vice-President shall become the President for the of the term. the new President shall appoint a new Vice-President for the remainder of that term.
5. Removal of Officers
- a. Any officer may be removed from the office at a regular or special meeting provided all Executive Board members are notified in writing via postal mail or email no less than five days in advance. There shall be at least two-thirds majority vote by the officers at the meeting.
 - b. The President (or the Vice-President, in the event of the removal of the President) shall be responsible for the duties of the removed officer until a replacement is appointed or elected. A special election shall be held within two months to fill the position for the remainder of the term. The special election shall be conducted according to the procedures for the election of officers at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE V

BOARDS

1. The Executive Board will consist of the current elected officers.
2. The Oral Board shall consist of three elected officers and two additional members that are in good standing.

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
Unit Accepted March 2026

ARTICLE VI

MEETINGS

1. Monthly meetings shall be held on the second Tuesday @ 7:30 p.m. at the Search and Rescue Building, or such other time and/or location as may be mutually agreed upon by the officers.
2. The President may call special meetings as necessary that must be attended by a majority of officers elected and appointed. Special meetings will be announced via the callout system with as much notice as possible.
3. Members desiring to bring issues affecting search and rescue activities and the 4x4 members before the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit, should contact the Secretary and President in writing no later than one week prior to the monthly meeting so the topic can be added to the agenda. The request should describe the issue and include suggestions for addressing the issue. The entire request will be added to that month's agenda.
4. Any elected officer may call the executive board for a telephone vote for time sensitive decisions. Any actions taken by the Executive Board, under such circumstances, will be presented to the membership at the next regularly scheduled membership meeting.

ARTICLE VII

BY-LAW CHANGES

1. A Bylaw and Policy review may be done annually as deemed necessary.
2. A quorum for by-law changes shall consist of 60% of members in good standing, as defined in current policy guidelines, including a minimum of two elected officers.
3. Any Unit member in good standing may suggest amendments to the by-laws.
4. Proposed amendments to the by-laws shall be drafted by the member requesting amendments and review during the by-law review.
5. The proposed amendments or rewrites require a majority vote of the quorum present at a regularly scheduled meeting to become effective.

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

Proposed February 2026
Unit Accepted March 2026

6. All Unit documents will have a creation date in the document header along with the title. References to “versions” of documents will be made by this creation date.

ARTICLE VIII

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

1. Conflict of interest – the purpose of the conflict of interest bylaws are to protect the organization’s tax-exempt status. Any violation of the conflict of interest policy may result in the loss of tax-exempt status and possible fines levied by the IRS.
 - a. Members shall not receive financial gain from the organization.
 - b. Members may be reimbursed for pre-approved continuing education classes, conferences, and trainings with proof of attendance and payment.
 - i. Reimbursement shall be pre-determined by the officers and voting members in good standing prior to attendance to said classes/trainings.
 - ii. Reimbursement shall be limited to expenses specifically related to the event with proof of attendance and proof of payment being required before reimbursement is to occur.
 - iii. Prepayment may be authorized under extenuating circumstances, on a case by case basis, with approval by the executive board. If prepayment was approved, and the person was not able to go and no one else was able to fill the spot, original prepaid member will be responsible for repayment to the Unit for the prepaid training costs.
2. Procedure for addressing the Conflict of Interest.
 - a. An interested person (director, officer, member of a committee, or member of the organization) may make a presentation to the organization. However, after said presentation, he/she will not be allowed to have a vote on the decision of said presentation. Further, the voting membership and officers shall discuss and decide if a conflict of interest exists.
 - b. Should any member become involved in an external public or private charitable organization and/or endeavor, the member shall not involve the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit in any manner.

ARTICLE IX

DISSOLUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION AND ASSETS

In the event of dissolution of the Whatcom County Search and Rescue 4x4 Unit, the net assets are to be distributed as follows: After all debts and obligations are paid or adequately provided for, the remaining assets shall be divided among the volunteer

Whatcom County SAR 4x4 Unit By-Laws

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organizations as decided by the Unit's Executive Board At the time of dissolution, said organizations shall be in good standing with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office. Further, said organizations shall be actively participating in search and rescue and shall have established a tax-exempt status as required in section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.