

Grande Prairie Technical Search and Rescue Association

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CODE OF CONDUCT	Effective: 2017SEP14	Review: 2019SEP14

1.0 Purpose	
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The Code of Conduct (Code) for Technical Search & Rescue applies to all members, directors, executive and volunteers of the organization. The Code reflects a commitment to the association's values and provides a framework to guide ethical conduct in a way that upholds the integrity and reputation of the association. Members are expected to behave in a way that aligns with this Code. They understand that this Code does not cover every specific scenario. Therefore, they use the spirit and intent behind this Code to guide their conduct, and exercise care and diligence in the course of their work with the association.

To demonstrate commitment to transparency and accountability, this Code is available to the public on the association's website.

2.0 Scope	
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This Policy will apply to all members, directors, executive and volunteers of Technical Search & Rescue.

3.0 Policy	
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3.1 Core Values:

- Members will act with impartiality and with integrity.
- Members will demonstrate respect and accountability.
- Members will recognize, reward and value each other.
- Members will share information, responsibility and decision making.

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3.2 Guiding Principles

These principles guide the behaviour and decisions of members:

- a. The actions and decisions of members are made to promote the public interest and to advance the mandate and long-term interests of the association.
- b. Members are responsible stewards of public resources.
- c. To serve the public interest, members have a responsibility to uphold and reinforce the association's values and principles.
- d. Members have a responsibility to act in good faith and to place the interests of the association above their own private interests.
- e. Members behave in a way that demonstrates that their behaviour and actions are fair and reasonable in the circumstance.
- f. Members enjoy the same rights in their private dealings as any other Albertan, unless it is demonstrated that a restriction is necessary in the public interest.
- g. When a member, as an individual, is subject to more than one code of conduct, the member must consider the expectations in all. Members understand that this Code is not intended to conflict with other Codes of Conduct, and will discuss any potential conflicts with the Chair of the Conduct & Competence Committee.
- h. The Code applies to all members unless a specific exemption is granted by the Board of Directors.
- i. Members know that when they become aware of a real or apparent conflict of interest, they must at the first opportunity disclose this conflict to the Chair of the Conduct & Competence Committee.

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- j. Members understand that disclosure itself does not remove a conflict of interest.
- k. Members encourage their colleagues to act fairly and ethically and know that they are able to raise concerns about a suspected breach by another to the Chair of the Conduct & Competence Committee without fear of reprisal.
- l. Members know that breaches of this Code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal of the member from the Organization.
- m. Members know that if they have any questions about the Code, or are not sure how to apply these principles, they should consult with the Chair of the Conduct & Competence Committee.
- n. Each member confirms at the Annual General Meeting their understanding of, and commitment to, the Code's expectations.

3.3 Behavioural Standards

Behavioural standards help members make appropriate decisions when the issues they face involve ethical considerations. Behavioural standards cannot cover all scenarios but provide guidance in support of day-to-day decisions. All members must adhere to the following standards:

- a. Members must not engage in any criminal activity, including, but not limited to, misappropriation of association funds, and comply with all relevant laws, regulations, policies and procedures.
- b. Members must not use their status or position with the association to influence elections or gain any benefit or advantage for themselves, their families, their business associates or others with whom they have a significant personal or business relationship.
- c. Member conduct contributes to a safe and healthy workplace that is free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation or violence.

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- d. Members must not use drugs or alcohol in a way that affects their performance and safety or the performance and safety of their colleagues, or that negatively impacts the reputation or operations of the association.
- e. Members must act in a way that is consistent with the association's policies on public comment. This includes but is not limited to commenting to the media or in social media on any operations or initiatives they are/were involved in unless approved by the Board or Directors, Tasking Agency or Government of Alberta.
- f. Members will not represent themselves as agents of a Tasking Agency, Search and Rescue Alberta or the Government of Alberta.
- g. Members will not publicly or privately criticize fellow members of the Search and Rescue Community to include but not limited to Executive, Board, Tasking Agencies, Government of Alberta, member groups or individual Search and Rescue members. This includes operational and administrative areas.
- h. Members must not condone, ignore or fail to report behaviour that does not uphold the values and principles of the association.
- i. Members must take reasonable steps to avoid situations where they may be placed in a real or apparent conflict between their private interests and the interests of the association. In other words, actions or decisions that members take on behalf of the association must not provide them with an opportunity to further the private interests of themselves, their families, their business associates or others with whom they have a significant personal or business relationship.
 - I. Confidential Information
Members must respect and protect confidential information, use it only for the work of the association and do not use it for personal gain. Members must comply with protocols that guide the collection, storage, use, transmission and disclosure of information.

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II. Gifts and Gratuities

Members must not accept or receive gifts and gratuities other than the normal exchange of gifts between friends or business colleagues, tokens exchanged as part of protocol or the normal presentation of gifts to people participating in public functions.

III. Outside Activities

Members must avoid participating in outside activities that conflict with the interests and work of the association. For example:

- i. Business Interests: Members must not hold interests in a business directly or indirectly through a relative or friend that could benefit from, or influence, the decisions of the association.
- ii. Employment: Members must resign from the association if they take employment that affects their performance or impartiality with the association.
- iii. Political Activity: Members may participate in political activities including holding membership in a political party, supporting a candidate for elected office or seeking elected office. However, they must not use their position with the association to seek contributions for a political party or activity from current or future clients or entities doing business with the association. In addition, any political activity must be clearly separated from activities related to the work for the association, must not be done while carrying out the work of the association and must not make use of association facilities, equipment or resources in support of these activities. If a member is planning to seek an elected municipal, provincial or federal office, they must disclose their intention in writing as soon as possible to the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee for guidance relating to their duties with the association.

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iv. Volunteer Activity: If members are involved in additional volunteer work, the activity must not influence or conflict with decisions relating to the organization.

IV. Pre-Separation

Members considering a new offer of appointment must be aware of and manage any potential conflicts of interest between their current position and their future circumstance, and must remove themselves from any decisions affecting their new appointment.

V. Post-Separation

Once members have left the association, they must not disclose confidential information that they became aware of during their time with the association and must not use their contacts with their former colleagues to gain an unfair advantage for their current circumstance.

VI. Property

Members may have limited use of the association's premises and equipment for authorized incidental purposes providing such use involves minimal additional expense to the association, must not interfere with the mission of the association and must not support a personal, private business.

VII. Related Persons or Parties

Members must avoid dealing with those in which the relationship between them might bring into question the impartiality of the member.

3.4 Administrative Processes

Administrative processes help members manage ethical dilemmas, including any real or apparent conflict of interest concerns.

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a. Administration

The Chair of Conduct and Competency Committee receives and ensures the confidentiality of all disclosures and ensures that any real or apparent conflict of interest is avoided or effectively managed. As well, the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee is responsible for providing advice and managing concerns and complaints concerning potential breaches of the Code, including conflicts of interest within the association. Even though an association may have a delegated process for responding to and managing concerns, the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee is responsible for ensuring procedural fairness.

b. Disclosure

It is the responsibility of each member to declare in writing to the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee those private interests and relationships that they think could be seen to impact the decisions or actions they take on behalf of the association. When there is a change in their responsibilities within the association or in their personal circumstance, members shall disclose in writing any relevant new or additional information about those interests as soon as possible. Where a real or apparent conflict of interest cannot be avoided, members must take the appropriate steps to manage the conflict.

Members disclose these real or apparent conflicts of interest so that the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee is aware of situations that could be seen as influencing the decisions or actions they are making on behalf of the association. This provides members, following a review by the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee, an opportunity to take action to minimize or remove the conflict. To actively manage a conflict of interest, options include:

- removing themselves from matters in which the conflict exists or is perceived to exist;
- giving up the particular private interest causing the conflict; and,
- in rare circumstances, resigning their position with the association.

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c. Reporting a Potential Breach by Another

Members are required to report a potential breach of this Code by another to the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee. When reporting a potential breach in good faith and with reasonable grounds, members are protected from retaliation for such reporting.

d. Responding to Potential Breach

Once a potential breach has been reported, the association's procedures for responding to and managing a potential breach will be promptly initiated. The Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee will review the circumstance and details of the potential breach and will notify the alleged member. The alleged member has the right to complete information and the right to respond fully to the potential breach. The identity of the reporter will not be disclosed unless required by law or in a legal proceeding. The Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee makes a decision and completes a report in a timely manner. The decision may range from finding no potential breach to one that reveals suspected criminal conduct.

e. Consequences of a Breach

Members who do not comply with the values, principles and standards of behaviour identified in this Code, including taking part in a decision or action that furthers their private interests, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal of the member from the board and, in some cases, possible legal proceedings.

f. Review of a Decision

A member can request in writing that the Alberta Office of the Fire Commissioner review the decision made by the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee that they have breached the association's Code of Conduct.

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3.5 Other Resources

a. Where to Get Advice

When members require advice and guidance in determining whether misconduct or a conflict exists, or need clarification, they may discuss their issue with:

- the President of the association;
- the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee; or
- the Vice President of the association
- Office of the Fire Commissioner.

b. Questions to Consider

When members are faced with a difficult situation, the following questions may help them decide the right course of action:

- Have I reflected on or consulted with the Chair of Conduct and Competence Committee about whether I am compromising the Code's values, principles or behavioural standards?
- Have I considered the issue from a legal perspective?
- Have I investigated whether my behaviour aligns with a policy or procedure of the association?
- Could my private interests or relationships be viewed as impairing my objectivity?
- Could my decision or action be viewed as resulting in personal gain, financial or otherwise?
- Could my decisions or actions be perceived as granting or receiving preferential treatment?

3.6 Affirmation

The Code of Conduct for Technical Search and Rescue was introduced on September 14th, 2017 and is reaffirmed at the Annual General Meeting by the Board to ensure it remains current and relevant.

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4.0 Reference	
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Guidelines for Developing a Code of Conduct for a Public Agency, Government of Alberta ([Code of conduct](#))