

**FRONT RANGE RESCUE DOGS Inc.**  
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## **New Member Information**

Front Range Rescue Dogs was incorporated in 1984 as a Colorado non-profit corporation, and is tax exempt under 501 (c)(3). It is an all-volunteer organization providing competent canine search and rescue capability to requesting agencies. Front Range Rescue Dogs, Inc. operates primarily in Boulder County under a memorandum of agreement with the Boulder County Sheriff Department, but is available for response on a state and national level through its membership in the Colorado Search and Rescue Board (CSRB) and the National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR).

Search and rescue requires an integrated response from many different agencies and resources. Front Range Rescue Dogs practices and responds to missions with many other volunteer groups, including Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, Boulder Emergency Squad, Longmont Emergency Unit and Volunteer Fire Protection Districts. These non-paid professionals interact with paid professionals through a comprehensive incident command system in Boulder County.

The primary need for search dogs in Colorado is to search for lost people in the wilderness. Front Range Rescue Dogs qualifies trailing and airscent dogs to respond to our wilderness searches. Trailing dogs are capable of following the scent path on the ground of a person, while airscent dogs search wide areas for airborne scent. Qualified airscent and trailing dogs can go on to qualify in the following specialties: avalanche, urban disaster / collapsed structure, evidence and water. Handlers and support personnel must be competent in wilderness survival, navigation, first aid, communications, and rescue operations. All dogs, dog handlers, and support personnel must attain FRRD established standards prior to becoming operational and being elected to operational status. Operational members must maintain these standards at all times in order to function effectively during missions.

Our team also has a strong commitment to preventive search-and-rescue and safety education. Experienced members are available to any group for discussions and demonstrations on backcountry safety and canine search-and-rescue.

Front Range Rescue Dogs welcomes new members who wish to become competent professionals in canine search and rescue and who have a strong desire to help people. We also welcome those who wish to contribute to the organization in other ways.

There are two categories of operational members within Front Range Rescue Dogs. Operational Support members either do not have a dog or do not have a qualified dog. They are sent into the field with handlers and dogs to assist in any way necessary. Handlers on the other hand must have all the skills of an Operational Support with the addition of having a qualified dog. Operational Supports and Handlers are equally necessary for the team to be effective on many searches.

As a prospective or pre-candidate member, it is important for you to understand that the mission of Front Range Rescue Dogs is to provide competent canine teams in search emergencies that can occur in any weather and at any location. Preparing to fulfill this role is a big commitment for both you and your dog. Working with a search dog is an immense honor and one of the most difficult endeavors you might attempt -- this is due to the arduous and often hazardous conditions in which searches occur as well as the complexities of working with both human and canine partners in very difficult and stressful situations.

Becoming an operational member of Front Range Rescue Dogs requires not only a large time commitment but also a large financial commitment. Each member must provide his or her own clothing and gear such as snowshoes, skis and backpacks to be able to search any time of year in almost any weather. Our members commonly drive long distances within or outside of Colorado to assist on missions. Front Range Rescue Dogs cannot reimburse any member for costs associated with a mission.

In order to succeed, you must become competent in search strategy, communications, incident command systems, backcountry travel, survival skills, first aid, navigation, radio procedures, and must also be able to contribute in a positive way in a team environment. You must attain and maintain a level of physical fitness that ensures that you can search efficiently in difficult terrain and in any weather condition. You must have sufficient outdoor clothing and gear so that when fielded you are able to maintain your own safety as well as the safety of others. We have found that having some real search experience prior to fielding a search dog in an actual search makes new handlers far more efficient. Consequently candidate members must show competency in all search and survival skills, be voted into operational membership and have some real mission experience prior to beginning the qualification testing of their dog.

It is recommended that members become operational before training a dog for search and rescue. This allows the individual to focus on perfecting his or her own skills without the distraction of a dog. We recognize, however, that in most situations new members come to Front Range Rescue Dogs with a dog. Having a dog while becoming operational is not a problem, it just requires a little more time and focus on your part. While you are working on developing the skills required of all operational members, you will also be training your dog to become your partner. It is helpful if you have prior experience in training a dog for some purpose (obedience titles, hunting, other working or competitive arenas). Since search work incorporates off-lead and often distance control, obedience is mandatory for the dog's safety and search efficiency. In addition, Front Range Rescue Dogs values its respected place in the community and dogs must never show aggressiveness toward people or other animals. Chasing wildlife is prohibited in all practice locations, and this tendency must be eliminated early for success as a search dog. Search work is hard work for the dog and requires high drive, sound temperament and physical fitness - please be fair to your dog - if there are signs that your dog would rather not be a search dog - honor them.

The members of Front Range Rescue Dogs are committed to training new search teams. Successful candidate members are critically important to our organization. However, all of us are volunteers with full lives and multiple commitments. We will do our best to help you achieve your goals, but the ultimate responsibility for success lies with you. Search dog training is not a "cookbook" exercise with clearly defined methodologies and timelines. Each candidate must be able to seek, incorporate and refine the advice and experience of others in order to develop an effective canine/handler team. Your willingness to set goals and self-evaluate are also important. Ultimately, your ability and dedication to train both yourself and your canine will predict your future success as a search team when, in moments of greatest hazard, someone's life may depend on your team's competence.

In order to maintain a healthy and functioning search dog team Front Range Rescue Dogs has developed policies to assist in getting new people operational. People who show interest in joining Front Range Rescue Dogs are considered pre-candidates. Pre-candidates are expected to attend practices to determine if they really want to commit the time and energy necessary to become an operational member of Front Range Rescue Dogs. Pre-candidates are not allowed to practice with their dog at team practices. At the same time pre-candidates are getting to know members of Front Range Rescue Dogs and the operational members are getting to know the pre-candidates. At every February, May, August and November monthly meeting Front Range Rescue Dogs holds elections for candidate and operational members. Pre-candidates must fill out an application and be elected at one of these meetings to become a candidate. Once a person becomes a candidate, he or she has one year to become an operational member. While candidates can bring their dogs to practice, the primary goal of all candidates is to become an operational member. Only after a person is operational and has some experience on real missions will we consider testing his or her dog for qualified status.

If the idea of carrying a pager that goes off at any hour, losing sleep to search for a missing person, searching in inclement weather, committing many hours every month to maintain your skills does not interest you; but you still would like to assist Front Range Rescue Dogs with our mission we always appreciate financial contributions to our team and we always are looking for new people to get lost (in a safe manner) so we may practice searching. Please talk to any operational member about opportunities for you in our organization.