



## COMSU POLICIES

In order for the Central Ohio Mounted Search Unit to be considered a viable and valuable resource for search operations in our area, it is mandatory that certain policies be set out and understood by all involved. Therefore, it is important to understand completely the principles involved.

- Search work is not a glamorous activity; instead, it is usually hard work
- There are no regular hours for an event and it can occur at any time and for as long as necessary
- Personnel participating in a rescue mission must be willing to accept directions from the officials in charge at all times. Our purpose is to assist; our suggestions may be solicited, but the final authority rests with the Incident Commander
- Any griping or complaining will not be tolerated
- Achievement of the mission is the major goal, but not by whom it is achieved
- Teamwork is paramount
- Be mindful that many missions may turn out to be false alarms
- Be mindful that you may rush to be ready and then be asked to wait a long period of time before movement is initiated
- In the event of a missing person, be keenly aware of the presence of a victim's family and friends who must be treated with patience, compassion, and sympathy
- The media may be present at a search but you are not to be interviewed by them. Instead, courteously refer the to someone in command

Some attributes of a good search team volunteer are:

- Commitment – if willing to be a part of the Unit, you must be committed to the cause and ideals involved. Be committed to become an active and productive member. The input of each member is important and welcome
- Availability – be certain that you can be available to respond on short notice to a search call out. If employed, discuss with your employer the possibility of leaving work early and obtain his/her permission to do so
- Accessibility – can you be easily reached by telephone or can someone find you quickly in the event of a call out
- Cooperative – are you a good team player? Teamwork is the foundation of search work. Looking out for and helping each other is vital
- Organized – maintain your equipment in good working order and have it readily available on short notice. In addition to search equipment, this would also include your horse trailer and tack as well as keeping your horses fit



In addition to the items enumerated above, a search volunteer will be expected to answer to a strict code of conduct:

- A professional, dignified demeanor is mandatory when representing the Unit
  - The use of foul language will not be allowed and may be grounds for dismissal
  - Under no circumstances will any alcoholic beverages be consumed while in uniform, during an actual mission, or at any training session. Doing so will result in immediate dismissal
  - “Cowboying” or any similar unsafe practices with horses will not be allowed and will result in immediate dismissal
  - Smoking is discouraged and is absolutely prohibited in any suspected crime scene area
  - The designated uniform vest (with identification badges and/or EMA patch attached) may only be worn while engaged in an actual search, organized training or public relations events sanctioned by COMSU
  - Be mindful of your body language and facial expressions. Strive to maintain an attentive, professional appearance
  - The specifics of a search and details of any victims or evidence are strictly confidential
  - COMSU is committed to maintaining an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination based on a person’s sex, race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, age, or ancestry, consistent with the Ohio and Federal Laws including Ohio Revised Code Sec 4112 et, seq., and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S. Code Sec 2000(e) et. Seq. No member may harass another because of the person’s race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, age, or ancestry. Examples of conduct prohibited by the Policy include using racial and ethnic slurs or jokes. COMSU will take prompt disciplinary and remedial action if its investigation shows a violation of this Policy. Depending on the circumstances, the disciplinary action may range from a warning to discharge
- Strong cohesion is vital to the success of the Search Unit
  - Any problems encountered during a search will be discussed at a debriefing, which will be held either immediately after the search or at the next meeting
  - Any problems specific to the Unit should never be aired to the general public, other units, or agencies
- Teamwork is essential
  - We must make an effort to get to know each member including his or her strengths and weaknesses
  - We must be accepting of those strengths and weaknesses without prejudicial judgment
  - We must be willing to accept constructive criticism – we can always learn something new from someone else
  - We must keep a watchful eye on each other and always be considerate of the weakest member



- Team leaders must never order actions that not every member is capable of doing
  - Every member is responsible for knowing the limitations of him/herself; and, in the case of the mounted member, the limitations of the horse
  - It is the member's responsibility to let the team leader know of any limitations
- When a search, search simulation, or public relations event has ended, good team members make certain all other members are accounted for and safe before leaving the premises
- Always clean up after yourself and your horse

### Horse/Rider Qualifying Procedure

The purpose of qualifying both the horse and the horse and rider team is to insure, first of all, safety for all those involved. The ability of the rider to be in control of his/her mount at all times is paramount. Therefore, we take the process of qualifying the horse very seriously.

A qualifying panel, consisting of the officers and any other appointees by the Board of Trustees, will make recommendations to the Board as to the ability of any horse/rider team to execute the qualifying standards set out in this manual.

Any member of the qualifying panel who is attempting to either: a) qualify his/her own horse; or b) qualify a family member and/or horse, will be excused from the panel during the attempt.

The process of certifying the horse in the obstacle course is intended to exhibit the ability of the horse/rider team to:

- remain in control while attempting to manage the obstacles
- show the horse's maneuverability
- show the teamwork between horse and rider

The most important factor involved in negotiating the obstacle course is SAFETY! This applies not only to a horse/rider team, but also to people and equipment in and around the area. A slow, quiet approach to each obstacle is preferred to a quick, hurried one.

The qualifying panel is not looking for perfect execution of each obstacle; but is looking for the attitude of both the rider and the horse when a problem is encountered. Remember, SAFETY FIRST!

Should any horse/rider team fail to successfully complete the obstacle course, an opportunity to re-test will be set up at a later date. The Board of Trustees will notify each team of the outcome of the qualification attempt in writing.



### Official Uniform of Central Ohio Mounted Search Unit

The purpose of a uniform for a search unit is for identification and visibility. Therefore, the official uniform of COMSU is:

- Shirt with sleeves
- Long pants or jeans
- Boots
- Identification badge and/or EMA patch
- Bright orange hunters vest
- Bright orange saddle pad cover
- A helmet is required for all official mounted events, search operations and search simulations