



United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries
Bureau/Office Heads
Solicitor
Inspector General

From: Thomas Balint
Director, Office of Emergency Management

Subject: Emergency Management Policy Bulletin 2025-01: Search and Rescue and Evacuation Support Boat Resource Typing Standard

1. PURPOSE

This memorandum promulgates the resource typing standard for Interior Search and Rescue (SAR) and evacuation support boats, Enclosure 1.

2. Resource Typing Change Notice

Interior has updated this policy and resource typing descriptions based on lessons learned during the 2023 and 2024 hurricane seasons.

This update changes the titles of some boat capability types to better reflect response support expectations from FEMA and the States.

FEMA and State (FL, GA, SC, and NC) SAR coordinators now better understand that most of Interior's ESF-9 SAR Support Boats do not come with qualified SAR personnel, only a boat with an operator and crewperson. Therefore, FEMA and the State SAR coordinators recommend shifting from waterborne SAR support to waterborne evacuation support resource capability titles.

The Still Water ESF-9 SAR Support Boat - Inshore - Type 3 resource capability name is changed to Still Water Waterborne Evacuation Support Boat - Inshore - Type 3.

The Moving Water ESF-9 SAR Support Boat - Lake/Reservoir/Bay/Canal - Type 3 resource capability name is changed to Moving Water Evacuation Support Boat - Lake/Reservoir/Bay/Canal - Type 3.

3. Background

As described in the [United States National Search and Rescue Supplement to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual](#) (NSS) and the [National Search and Rescue Plan](#) (National SAR Plan), Interior serves as one of the U.S. SAR agencies that uses of

all available resources in all types of SAR operations to enable the United States to satisfy its humanitarian, national, and international commitments and obligations.

Interior's primary role within the NSS and the National SAR Plan is land-based search and rescue within the jurisdictional authorities of Interior's land management Bureaus. Interior's secondary role is to provide support to other agencies conducting search and rescue operations.

The most common request for Interior SAR and waterborne evacuation support boats is from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Support Function – 9 (Search and Rescue) to provide additional SAR and waterborne evacuation capabilities to States, Tribes, and Territories impacted by a Major Disaster.

4. Policy

This resource typing standard describes the capabilities and requirements to categorize and identify watercraft owned and managed by Interior Bureaus and Offices that are capable and appropriate to support SAR efforts conducted by Interior or another agency.

The Type 3 *Swiftwater Rescue ESF-9 SAR Boat* capability is the only fully qualified SAR resource identified within this policy that does not need additional SAR qualified crew to be fully capable to conduct SAR Operations.

The Type 3 *Still Water ESF-9 Evacuation Support Boat - Inshore* and the *Moving Water ESF-9 Evacuation Support Boat - Lake/Reservoir/Bay/Canal* capability descriptions provide only a boat, boat operator, and crewperson that meet the capability description provided in Enclosure 1. Additional SAR qualified crewmembers are required from Interior, U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA US&R Teams, or other agencies to form a complete SAR boat package.

5. Implementation

1. Using the boat resource typing standards listed in Enclosure 1 Bureaus and Offices that own and maintain boats within Interior will identify boats within the Bureau or Office inventory that meet one or more of the capability descriptions.
2. Bureaus and Offices that have identified boats meeting one or more of the capability descriptions will provide a list of those boats to their Bureau or Office Emergency Management Coordinator. The list of boats must include, at a minimum, the following information:
 - Name of unit/station.
 - Address (Street, city, State) of storage location
 - Resource typing category.
 - Manufacturer.
 - Model
 - Type (e.g., jon boat, ridged hull, hovercraft, inflatable, flatbottom, utility, bay, bowrider, deck, cabin cruiser, fishing, science, pontoon)
 - Name of Boat Operator(s).
 - Yes/No confirming routine maintenance is conducted, and the boat and trailer are in operating/usable condition.
3. During the calendar year 2026 the Office of Emergency Management will submit a change request to NWCG to add the equipment resource categories, kinds, and types and make them available to register in the Interagency Resource Ordering Capability (IROC).

4. The Interior Watercraft Safety Group, managed by Office of Occupational Safety and Health will continue to evaluate the current Interior Motorboat Operators Certification Course against this resource capability description, operational requirements, and FEMA and/or USCG standards to ensure motorboat operators within Interior are properly trained to safely conduct SAR support operations described in this policy.
5. This version of the resource capability descriptions does not include air boats or cargo vessels. While some cargo vessels will also meet the criteria for one or more of the SAR Support Boat resource typing descriptions in Enclosure 1, Office of Emergency Management will work to develop air boat and cargo vessel specific resource typing in FY26.

Enclosure 1: DOI ESF-9 SAR Support Boat Capability Descriptions

cc: Senior Executive – Emergency Management Council
Emergency Management Council
Interior Watercraft Safety Group
FEMA Assistant Administrator, Response Directorate
FEMA Region 4 Search and Rescue Coordinator
FEMA National Integration Center
USCG Office of Boat Forces (CG-731)
USCG Office of Search and Rescue (CG-SAR)
USCG Office of Emergency Management (CG-OEM)
National Wildfire Coordinating Group
National Interagency Fire Center

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Enclosure 1

Enclosure 1: DOI ESF-9 SAR and Evacuation Support Boat Capability Descriptions

Still Water ESF-9 Evacuation Support Boat - Inshore - Type 3

Water Speed	0-1knt
Boat Draft	between 3" and 24"
Power	min 15hp
Hull Type	Any that can operate in water draft range, except airboats. Note: This resource typing description does not apply to airboats, airboat resource typing will be developed in FY25.
Boat Operator	Certified as either a 1) Interior Boat Operator Less Than 25 Feet Length (BTOP); or 2) Boat Operator Over 25 Feet Length (BT25); or 3) FEMA Boat Operator (Search and Rescue) As part of these qualifications found in the Incident Position Qualification Guide Interior boat operators must have completed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interior Motorboat Operators Certification Course (MOCC) or an equivalent Interior approved course. 2. EMI: Introduction to the ICS, ICS-100 (IS-100.c) 3. EMI: NIMS, An Introduction (IS-700.b)
Min # of people	Boat must have a safe operating capacity of at least 6 people. This includes 1 boat operator and 1 crewperson (comes with boat) and 4 other passengers. This asset may become a fully SAR capable platform with the addition of 2 qualified SAR team members to the crew complement.
Vehicle and Trailer to move boat to wherever needed	Yes
Equipment	All standard equipment required by Interior in the DOI MOCC Student Manual and the USCG for the boat type, plus: Spot light (Min of 1000 lumens) Two rescue throw bags with a minimum of 50ft of line in each bag

Moving Water ESF-9 Evacuation Support Boat - Lake/Reservoir/Bay/Canal - Type 3

Water Speed	In coastal regions with tidal influence, the water speed can vary significantly based on factors such as topography, channel width, and tidal patterns. In the open bay, ocean tidal currents are relatively weak. Near estuary entrances, narrow straits and inlets, the speed of tidal currents can reach up to several kilometers per hour. Boat operations within these areas require boat operator judgement and experience.
Draft	Between 3" and 36"
Power	min 45hp
Hull Type	Any, including airboats. Note: While airboats may be designated as a Moving Water ESF-9 SAR Support Boat, specific airboat resource typing will be developed in FY25.
Boat Operator	Certified as either a 1) Interior Boat Operator Less Than 25 Feet Length (BTOP); or 2) Boat Operator Over 25 Feet Length (BT25); or 3) FEMA Boat Operator (Search and Rescue) As part of these qualifications found in the Incident Position Qualification Guide Interior boat operators must have completed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interior Motorboat Operators Certification Course (MOCC), inclusive of the moving water training module, or an equivalent Interior approved course. 2. EMI: Introduction to the ICS, ICS-100 (IS-100.c) 3. EMI: NIMS, An Introduction (IS-700.b)
Min # of people	Boat must have a safe operating capacity of at least 6 people. This includes 1 boat operator and 1 crewperson (comes with boat) and 4 other passengers. This asset may become a fully SAR capable platform with the addition of 2 qualified SAR team members to the crew complement.
Vehicle and Trailer to move boat to wherever needed	Yes
Equipment	All standard equipment required by Interior in the DOI MOCC Student Manual and the USCG for the boat type, plus: Spot light (Min of 1000 lumens) Two rescue throw bags with a minimum of 50ft of line in each bag

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Swiftwater Rescue ESF-9 SAR Boat - Type 3

Water Speed	Swift water greater than 1 kt
Draft	between 3" and 24"
Power	min 45hp
Hull Type	Any
Boat Operator	Certified as a Swiftwater Rescue Boat Operator (SWBO)
Min # of people	Boat must have a safe operating capacity of at least 6 people. This includes 1 boat operator and 2 Swiftwater Rescue Technicians (SWF2) and ability to hold at least 3 other passengers.
Vehicle and Trailer to move boat to wherever needed	Yes
Equipment	All standard equipment required by Interior in the DOI MOCC Student Manual and the USCG for the boat type, plus all equipment necessary to conduct swiftwater rescue operations.
DHS Guidance	https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/InflatableBoatsSWR_TN_0308-508.pdf