



MODERN INNOVATIONS IN FIRE AND RESCUE: THE SPECIAL RESCUE FORCE'S CONTRIBUTION IN PUBLIC SAFETY IN PANIQUI TARLAC

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the experiences of the Special Rescue Force (SRF) of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in Paniqui, focusing on their capabilities, responsibilities, limitations, and the measures they take to overcome operational challenges. Through qualitative data gathered from SRF members, the research uncovers a strong sense of duty and preparedness among personnel, who are extensively trained to handle a wide range of rescue operations, including urban, water, mountain, and hazardous materials rescue.

Despite their advanced training and technical knowledge, one major concern surfaced the lack of appropriate tools and equipment needed for specialized rescue operations. This limitation hampers their ability to fully execute their skills, especially in high-risk scenarios. Nevertheless, the SRF demonstrates resilience and resourcefulness by forging cooperative ties with local disaster management agencies, such as the MDRRMC and PDRRMO, to borrow essential rescue tools.

The findings underscore the need for stronger government support, particularly in fulfilling the BFP's modernization goals. The study concludes by recommending increased funding, regular station visits by national headquarters, continued inter-agency collaboration, and broader access to advanced training courses. With these improvements, the SRF can perform more efficiently and independently, ensuring quicker and more effective emergency responses in times of crisis.

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) is a one of the key agency in the Philippine government responsible for public safety, particularly in rescue operations during emergencies such as fires, earthquakes, floods, vehicular accidents, and other hazardous situations. It is established to safeguard lives and properties from the threat of fire and other emergencies. Beyond firefighting, they serve as first responders, trained in search and rescue, emergency medical assistance, and disaster response to protect lives and property, the BFP plays a critical role in public safety

In our country the Bureau of Fire Protection is mandated to enforce the Fire Code of the Philippines (PD 1185) in every commercial building and establishment not only to ensure the safety of the people but also to make sure that every building within the community is compliant with the standard set forth with the said Fire Code. The BFP is also responsible in suppression and prevention of all kinds of destructive fire on buildings, houses and other structure, forest, land transportation vehicles and equipment including the ships and vessels docked at piers or wharves anchored in major ports, petroleum industry installations, plane crashes and any other similar activities. In addition, they have also the power to investigate all causes of fire and if necessary, file the proper complaint within the court that has jurisdiction over the case (BFP Mandates and Function).

Under RA 9263 which expands the mandates and function of the BFP, the Bureau is not just only focuses in emergency response but also through prevention efforts. Their programs on fire safety,

routine inspections, and community education help minimize the chances of fires and other dangers. By conducting fire drills, training sessions, and awareness campaigns, they provide individuals and organizations with the necessary knowledge to implement safety measures, reducing risks and improving disaster preparedness.

The BFP's capabilities extend beyond fire incidents to include various emergencies and disasters. Republic Act No. 10121 (Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010), this law recognizes the BFP as a key player in disaster risk reduction and management. It mandates the BFP to participate in disaster risk reduction planning, emergency response, and coordination efforts alongside other government agencies.

However nowadays the bureau of fire protection faces several challenges such as the lack of modern tools and equipment necessary in fire and rescue operation, adequate training programs and sufficient fundings to carry out its mandates stated under the law (Longa And Perena 2024). For the past years our government makes an effort to improve the capability of the bureau through modernization program, creating and improving trainings and program for fire and rescue operations and expanding its inter-agency cooperation with other department related to rescue operations (BFP first semester 2024 narrative-accomplishment report).

The creation of a Special Rescue Force (SRF) within the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) marks a major step forward in modern



firefighting and rescue efforts, a highly skilled group prepared to handle complex emergency situations that go beyond standard firefighting operations. As fire-related emergencies grow more complex due to urban expansion, industrial risks, and climate-driven disasters, a specialized unit with advanced training and technology becomes crucial. The SRF utilizes different tools to enhance efficiency and accuracy in rescue missions.

Responding to high-risk catastrophes and disasters that require specialized equipment and sophisticated expertise, the Bureau of Fire Protection's Special Rescue Force (SRF) is an essential force committed to public safety. In order to perform complex rescue operations, such as search and retrieval attempts during natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and fires, this elite squad must complete extensive training. They are also skilled in performing technical rescues in dangerous situations, confined spaces, and collapsed buildings.

In addition to responding to disasters, the Special Rescue Force (SRF) manages incidents involving hazardous materials, successfully lowering the risks related to nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological threats. Their extensive emergency medical care training also allows them to treat patients on-site before full medical teams arrive. In order to evacuate civilians, secure impacted areas, and restore order during emergencies, the SRF collaborates closely with other emergency response units. The Special Rescue Force's quick reaction and specialized abilities are vital to saving lives and preserving public safety.

Since the Special rescue force was already introduced and its importance in the public safety. This study aims to know what are the capabilities, responsibilities, and limitation of Special Rescue Force of BFP Paniqui, Tarlac on firefighting and rescue operation, with a focus on how their specific capabilities improve the Bureau of Fire Protection in its overall effectiveness.

By studying the capabilities and limitations of our Special Rescue Force in firefighting and rescue operations is essential for ensuring effective emergency response, resource allocation, and responder safety. Understanding their strengths enable the high ranking officials for better deployment in a complex situation that requires a highly trained individual in dealing with such scenarios. This study would also look for the limitations of this unit in rescue operations that could help to prevent the risk-taking and operational failure. By assessing these factors, we can identify the areas that needs to be improve such as the training and the advance equipment's or tools needed in responding in emergency situations that could minimize the number of casualties.

In addition, this study aims to help the not only the special rescue force but the whole Bureau of Fire Protection in achieving its roles, safeguarding of properties and ensuring the safety and well-being of a the Filipino people.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed the qualitative method design in order to collect and analyze the data that helps to provide better understanding and explanation of the study in question. The researchers use a qualitative research method to gather in-depth insight to understand concepts, thoughts and experiences of participants in which include interviews with open-ended questions.

In this study, Case Study was chosen to determine the Capabilities, Responsibilities and limitation of special rescue force of the Bureau of Fire Protection in the Municipality of Paniqui Tarlac.

Population and Locale of the study

The study will be conducted at BFP Paniqui Tarlac where the participants are assigned. The participants in this study will be BFP officers from the Special Rescue Force unit selected through purposive sampling. The criteria for selection will include: (1) being an active member of the BFP under the special rescue force unit; (2) with a rank of at least F01 to SFO4 and (3) having experience in responding a complex emergency situations that requires specialized skills. Their roles in BFP Special Rescue Force will provide valuable knowledge and experience relevant to this study.

Data Gathering Instrument

The data collection method that was used is the interview. The interview is semi-structured. This is a form of interview where there are set questions ask but are not limited but flexible wherein the researcher will make follow-up questions. This way of gathering information can supplement and boost the validity and dependability of the data.

Data Gathering procedure

The researchers approached the respondents to establish a good rapport with them. From there, the researchers talked to the respondents to ask permission to use them in the present study. Upon the approval of the request, the researchers presented a letter of consent to the respondents to ask their cooperation to conduct the study emphasizing the confidentiality of the answers and anonymity of the respondents. To begin, the researchers schedule an interview with each subject and discussed topics more freely and naturally, also researchers had notes during interviews and observations from the participants and interviews were also recorded in order to achieve a greater understanding of the responsibilities, capabilities and limitations of the special rescue force of the Bureau of Fire Protection.

Data Analysis

Using the interview guide, questions and responses were documented in a narrative format. After gathering the data, all viewpoints were examined and presented through thematic analysis. Furthermore, thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method used in the social sciences to identify and present



recurring patterns or themes in data. It involves careful reading and interpretation of the material to extract meaning and understand different subjects and interpretations (Energy Research & Social Science)

Ethical Consideration

The researcher follows ethical guidelines to maintain the integrity and protection of the study. All participant information, including personal details, is kept strictly confidential to prevent identification. Before the interview, participants receive a written consent form explaining the study's purpose. Participation is entirely voluntary, with individuals free to withdraw at any time without pressure or coercion. The researcher also ensures that all

collected data is genuine and not falsified. Additionally, data is securely stored and accessible only to authorized personnel, preventing unauthorized access. Upholding these ethical standards helps establish trust, safeguard participants' rights, and ensure the study's credibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and a discussion of the data analysed are interpreted. The tables below show the general themes extracted from the answers of the respondents in relation to their experiences as being a member of the Special Rescue Force of the Bureau of Fire Protection. Excerpts were also taken verbatim to prove the themes identified.

Table 1. Superordinate and Subordinate Themes derived from the data.

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Capabilities	Can respond to any kind of Incident
Responsibilities	Perform special search and rescue operation
Limitation	Lack of necessary equipment
Measures Taken	Cooperation with the Different Agency

The superordinate themes are based and in-line with the research questions which produced subordinate themes which is explained in the next table.

Table 2. Capabilities

Subordinate Themes	Excerpts
Can respond to any kind of incident	“as a member of Bureau of Fire Protection we are mandated to rescue and provide the necessary action to respond to any kind of incident”
	“we are doing our best to perform different rescue response because it is part of our job”.

The table reveals that our Special Rescue Force of the Bureau of Fire Protection can do different search and rescue operations as mandated in Republic Act no. 9514 or the revised Fire Code of the Philippines and Republic Act no. 6975 or DILG Act of 1990t. Since all of the respondents undergoes semi-annually training such as Urban Search and Rescue, Water Search and Rescue. Mountain Search and Rescue, and Hazardous Material which serves as a refresher course for them to recall the different

techniques and skills which are necessary in performing their duty not only as member of the Bureau of Fire Protection but also a member of Special Rescue Force.

Thus, the table shows that our Special Rescue Force is well equipped in terms of skills in performing different search and rescue operation.

Table 3. Responsibilities

Subordinate Themes	Excerpts
Perform Special Rescue Operation	“SRF is being called when there is an incident that needs special rescue operation”
	“We are responsible in conducting rescue operation that requires special skills and techniques”

The table reveals that the skills of our Special Rescue Force is being applied whenever there is an incident that requires their advanced skills in performing special rescue response. This mandate is based from the Republic Act no 11589 or the BFP Modernization Act. In addition, all of the newly absorbed Fire Officer 1 undergoes to the Fire Basic Recruit Course which

equipped them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively combat fires and respond to emergencies. Moreover, our Special Rescue Force has specialized in the Basic Rope Rescue Training Course (BRTC) which qualifies them as a member Special Rescue Force. This training equips firefighters with fundamental rope rescue skills



and techniques, including rope Manship, knot tying, and various rescue techniques like hauling and rappelling. This course prepares firefighters for high-angle rescues and other difficult terrain scenarios such as low angle rescue operation and -----

Special Rescue Force has the responsibility in conducting special rescue operation since they have advanced knowledge and skills in performing special incident search and rescue operations.

Table 4. Limitations

Subordinate Theme	Excerpts
Lack of Equipment equipment”	“ We don’t have the equipment necessary in responding certain incident that requires special tool” “ We only have the basic or manual “ As a Filipino we are resourceful in responding to an incident just to fulfill our mandate”

As shown in table 2 above, the special rescue force is equipped with the necessary techniques and skills in performing rescue operation that requires their advanced knowledge and they have undergone several training courses wherein they are being thought on how to use the different advanced tools. However table 4 reveal that even they have the advanced knowledge on

how to operate and use these kinds of advanced equipment and tools but in real situation they cannot apply their skills because they don’t have the proper tool in responding special rescue operations such as boom truck, hydraulic spreader, cutters and hydraulic rams.

Table 4. Remedy

Subordinate Themes	Excerpts
Cooperation with the different Agency	“ we are coordinating with the different agency that has necessary tool in rescue operation ” “ often times we are barrowing tools from the MDRRMC and PDRMO”

These table show that during the times of rescue operation that requires special tool and equipment the BFP coordinates with the different agencies such as the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council and Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office which provides them with different tools which can be use for the effective and efficient rescue operations.

Thus, the limitation experienced by the Special Rescue Force in terms of equipment is being addressed through the inter-agency cooperation in order to perform special search and rescue operation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Based on the data gathered and presented, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The members of Special Rescue Force of BFP Paniqui station are knowledgeable and equipped with skills in not only in responding natural calamities but also with the different emergency operation that needs specialized skills in performing rescue operations.
2. Despite that the selected Special Rescue Force is well equipped with specialized skills in terms of responding emergency operation, they don’t have the proper tools and

equipment which is necessary in their performance of their duty.

3. Even the Special Rescue Force is lack of proper tools and equipment, other agencies such as Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council, Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office and other agencies are providing the tools and equipment they need.

Recommendations

Based on the data gathered and presented, the following recommendations are drawn:

1. The government should allot more budget to fulfill the modernization program of the Bureau of Fire Protection in order to procure the equipment needs by the whole agency down to the lowest fire fighters. This could help the whole operation of the bureau and to become more effective and efficient in responding emergency operation without relying with other different agency.
2. The Department of Interior and Local Government thru the initiative of the Bureau of Fire Protection national headquarters shall visit each Municipal Fire station not just only to monitor but also to know the real situation of each fire station.
3. The Local Government Unit together with other different agencies related in emergency response shall maintain



proper coordination and cooperation this could help reduce or avoid delays in time in responding incident or emergency situation.

4. The Bureau of Fire Protection thru the National Fire Training Institute shall conduct additional trainings that specializes the Basic Rope Rescue Training Course to the regular Fire Fighters that can provide additional manpower that can help in responding special rescue operation.

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