



Official Statement by SFESA : Search and Recovery Operation – Sauniatu Falls

This is to confirm that the Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority (SFESA) responded to an emergency request for assistance in the search and rescue of a teenager who was swept away by sudden flash flooding while swimming with friends at the Sauniatu Waterfalls.

The Incident

On the afternoon of Saturday, 31 January, an 18-year-old boy was tragically swept away by a sudden water swift while swimming at **Sauniatu Falls**. An intensive search and rescue operation was launched immediately, continuing through to today, Sunday, 1 February. At approximately 2:00 PM this afternoon, the recovery team located the body in a deep fall in the Manunu area.

A Community Effort

Commissioner Tanuvasa Oloapu Petone Mauga and the SFESA Executive sincerely acknowledge the overwhelming display of unity, resilience, and compassion shown over the past 48 hours. This operation was truly a collective effort, and SFESA extends its deepest gratitude to:

The Villages of Manunu, Lalomauga, and Sauniatu & Nearby Villages – for your tireless physical assistance, local knowledge, and support in navigating challenging terrain during the search.

Village Reverends – for your spiritual guidance, prayers, and comfort provided to both the search teams and the grieving family, as well as for the utilities and donations extended to the team during the operation

Off-Duty Firefighters and Corporate Support Staff – approximately 30 off-duty firefighters and five support staff, including the Commander Mechanic, who responded without hesitation to support the Commissioner and Executive team on the ground

Our Condolences

The family of the young man remained at the scene throughout the operation. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this incredibly difficult time. This operation reflects the strength of our community spirit and our shared commitment to being emergency ready. When tragedy strikes, our villages and first responders stand as one.

Fa'afetai tele lava for your support and service.

Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority

[OPERATION PICTORIAL]



1.1 Commissioner Tanuvasa Oloapu Petone Mauga, together with community members, who have come together to assist the Authority with search and rescue operations



1.2 AC Operations Matofai Esau Matau, Commander Operations Aleaga Fuafiva, Commander Training Kereta Samia, and the Operations Team after a coordinated community-supported search and rescue operation





1.3 1.4 Equipped, trained, and ready — SFESA personnel preparing essential rescue equipment ahead of operations



1.5 Principal HR Taloaolii, Commander Mechanic Maiava, together with the Commissioner and senior staff of the Corporate Department, providing refreshment support during the operation.