



## Rogers Fire Department Standard Operating Procedures

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Water and Ice Rescue		
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<b>Approved By:</b>	Tom Jenkins	<b>Last Updated:</b>	November 2017
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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to give general guidelines to be used by rescue personnel conducting a water rescue. Rescue personnel must use judgment, experience, and training to adapt to the specific situation.

### POLICY

According to federal regulations and standards, the Rogers Fire Department Special Operations Team (SOT) shall act and perform as the city's swift water rescue response unit and provide:

- Technical expertise
- Assistance
- Appropriate equipment
- Response for the protection of life, property, and the environment

In addition, all personnel assigned to the Field Operations Division will be trained and prepared to support this effort.

### Water Rescue Assignment

The City Wide Tour Commander (CWTC) shall evaluate incidents dispatched that may have the potential of being a swift water rescue incident. Besides the CWTC, any company officer may call for a water rescue response in the event they find themselves in a situation requiring additional resources and expertise. The 1st alarm assignment for a water or ice rescue inside the city includes the following:

- 2 Closest Fire Companies
- Closest Medic Unit
- Ladder 1
- Ladder 5 with Rescue Boat 5

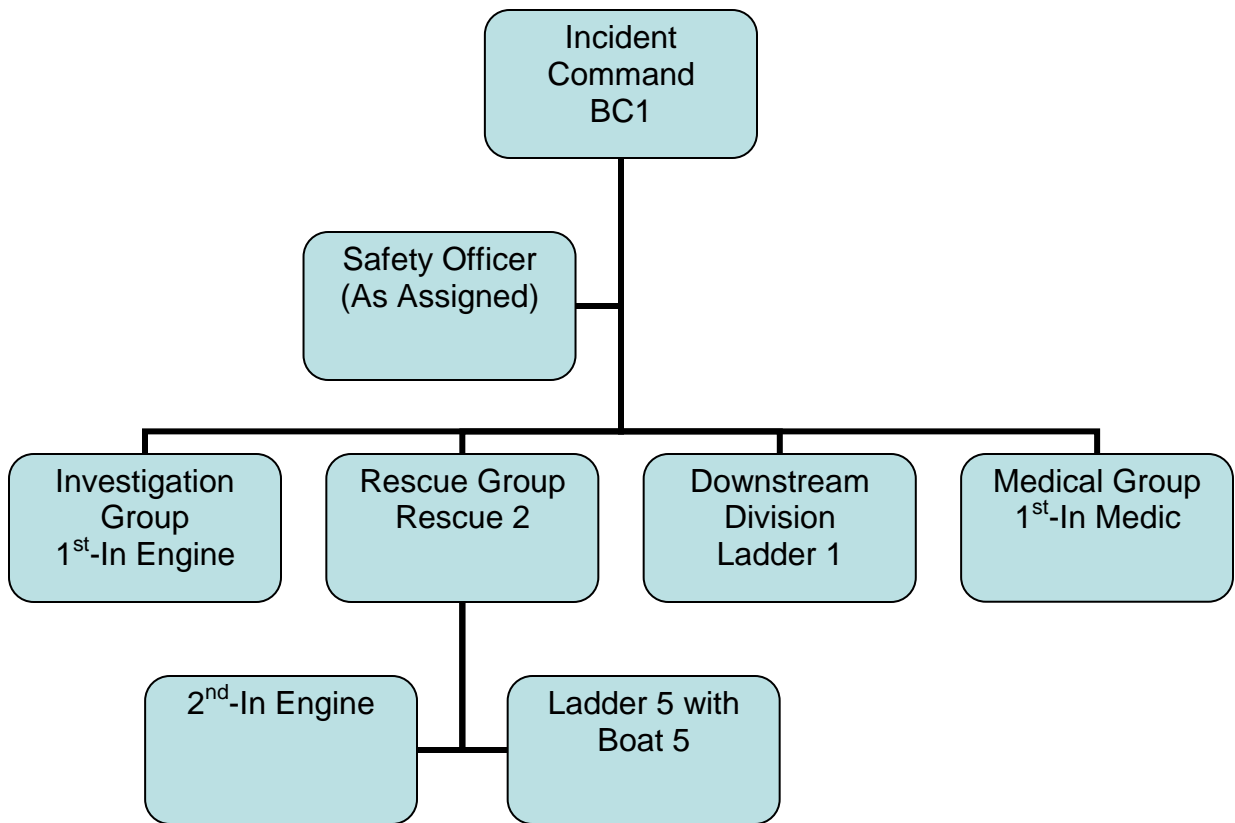
- Rescue 2
- Battalion 1

The standing orders for these first alarm companies are as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup>-In Engine Company: Establish Investigation Group. Perform scene assessment, immediate control actions, and locate witnesses and maintenance personnel. Upon arrival of the SOT, establish Upstream Division.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-In Engine Company: Report to Rescue Group. Be prepared to perform support/supply functions.
- Medic Unit: Establish Medical Group
- Ladder 1: Establish Downstream Division. Responsible for downstream operations.
- Rescue 2, Ladder 5, Rescue Boat 5: Establish Rescue Group. Crew should be prepared to perform victim rescue/recovery functions.
- Battalion 1: Incident Command

It is the responsibility of Ladder 5 to respond with Rescue Boat 5. If Ladder 5 is unavailable, the CWTC shall ensure that another company responds to Station 5 to respond with the boat. The "Rescue Boat 5" unit is made up of the rescue boat itself, trailer, and pull vehicle. The department maintains this is a ready and intact resource at all times. Rescue Boat 5 should be driven by the Ladder 5 firefighter. The unit shall respond in tandem with Ladder 5 in an emergency mode.

All technical rescue incidents shall have a structured intervention system. This system, under NIMS, shall be group based and have the responsibilities listed in this document. In large multi-strategy incidents, a rescue branch may be enacted. Most incidents will involve an ICS setup similar to the chart below.



## **Safety**

1. All personnel participating in a water rescue operation shall wear at a minimum a personal flotation device within 25 feet of water, work gloves, and a helmet - no structural firefighting gear, including fire helmet at any time.
2. Immediate assessment and resource allocation is critical to a successful operation.
3. In swift water operations, no rescuer shall be attached to a fixed line.
4. Crews must maintain strict continuity and PAR during water rescues.

## **Tactical Considerations**

### **Phase I: Scene Arrival and Assessment**

Upon arrival at a water rescue operation and prior to the arrival of SOT response teams, first response personnel should undertake an initial assessment and initial strategy. These potential scenarios exist:

- The victim is not in immediate danger of drowning, but special skills will be required to remove the victim/s from the water.
- The victim is struggling to keep from going under water or has already submerged, but there is still a rescue/resuscitation hope.
- The victim reportedly has been carried downstream and intensive search efforts are required to locate victim/s for rescue
- The operation is a body recovery. If a body recovery is confirmed, slowing all incoming units to a non-emergency response is suggested.

A. Secure responsible party or witness

Command should locate witnesses as soon as possible after arriving on scene. This will help in identifying and locating victim/s, determining causes and problems, and establishing search/rescue/recovery operational action plans.

B. Assess the need for additional resources

Command should immediately begin assessing the need for additional resources.

C. Assess the hazards

A thorough assessment of all scene hazards must be completed as soon as possible. All personnel should be briefed on the hazards that are present. Hazards associated with water rescue operations include: volume, velocity, and temperature of water, floating debris, unusual drop-offs, hydraulic effects, and depth of water.

D. Decide on "Rescue" or "Recovery"

Based on the conditions present and the hazards to rescuers, Command will have to make the decision to operate in the rescue or recovery mode. If Command determines that the operation will be run in the rescue mode, rescue should begin as soon as resources are available.

E. Decide on an action plan

Command should establish an action plan as soon as possible. The step-by-step plan should be communicated to all personnel involved in the rescue.

## Phase II: Pre-Rescue Operations

### A. Group/Division Responsibilities for Water Rescue

The **Upstream Division** (Preferably the 1<sup>st</sup>-In Engine after completing investigation) shall be responsible for spotting floating debris that is approaching the rescue group and notifying Command.

The **Downstream Division** (Preferably Ladder 1) shall deploy with throw bags for use in the event that victims are washed downstream from the rescue area.

The **Rescue Group** (Preferably Ladder 5, Boat 5, and Rescue 2 crew) shall be responsible for performing the rescue/recovery function.

### B. Make the general area safe

Secure a perimeter around the hazard area and prohibit non-emergency personnel from approaching in or around the water. Consideration should be given to the use of a helicopter for the task of aerial recon for victim search and hazard spotting.

### C. Make the rescue area safe.

Personnel working in the rescue area (waters edge) shall have personal protective equipment (PPE), including personal flotation device (PFD), gloves, and a water rescue helmet, or appropriate SCUBA gear during dive rescue/recovery operations.

### D. Pre-Rescue/Recovery.

The Rescue Group Supervisor shall be responsible for consulting with the Incident Commander to formulate a rescue plan and shall see that necessary equipment is gathered to operate according to the action plan. The Rescue Group Supervisor shall assign personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase.

## Phase III: Rescue Operations

All personnel shall be briefed on the rescue plan prior to its implementation. Rescue operations should be conducted from low-risk to high-risk. Rescues should be conducted with the least amount of risk to the rescuers necessary to rescue the victim. The order of water rescue from low risk to high risk will be:

- 1. Talk** - If possible, talk the victim into swimming to shore or assisting the rescuers with his/her own rescue. If a victim is stranded in the middle of a flash flood, this will not be prudent.
- 2. Reach** - If possible, the rescuer should extend his/her hand or some other object, such as a pike pole, to remove the victim from the water.

**3. Throw** - If the victim is too far out in the water to reach, rescuer(s) should attempt to throw the victim a throw bag or some piece of positive flotation (i.e., PFD, rescue ring). Downstream personnel should be in position during the actual rescue operation. If the victim is able to grab the throw bag, the rescuer can pendulum belay or haul the victim to the nearest bank. Care should be taken to assure the victim will be belayed to a safe downstream position.

Note: Personnel that have had operational level water rescue training should be able to conduct the above rescues without the help of the Special Operations Team (S.O.T). If the victim cannot be reached by either of these methods, Command should consider stopping the operation until units of the S.O.T. arrive.

**4. Row** - If it is determined that a boat based operation shall be used to affect rescue, Command has the option of using the larger rescue boat (Boat 5), or using the smaller OceanID inflatable boat. If using the smaller non-powered boat, the IC should assign a company on the opposite bank to assist the Rescue Group in establishing an anchor for a rope system. The company on the opposite bank will be made aware of the action plan. The Rescue Group Supervisor will be responsible for seeing that the rope system used for the boat based operation is built safely and correctly. A minimum of a 2-point tether should be built for swift-water operations. The Rescue Group should consider personal protective equipment (PPE) for victim(s).

**5. Go** - If it is not possible to row (boat base operation) to the victim, it may become necessary to deploy a rescuer into the water to reach the victim. This is a very high risk operation. Only rescuers with the proper training and equipment should be allowed to enter the water. Prior to the rescuer actually proceeding into the water, he/she shall discuss the action plan, including specific tasks and objectives, hazards and alternate plans. The rescuer shall never be attached to a life line without the benefit of a quick-release mechanism. The rescuer should take PPE of at least a PFD to the victim. Members shall not do a breath-hold surface dive in an attempt to locate a victim beneath the surface of the water.

**6. Helo** - At times the use of a helicopter is the most reasonable method of reaching the victim. Helicopter operations over water are considered high risk operations. Command should consult with the Rescue Group Supervisor and the pilot to determine the risk/benefit of the use of a helicopter. The Incident Commander will have the final say on the use of a helicopter for water rescue operations. The pilot will have the final say on how the helicopter will be used.

### **Vehicle in the Water**

Many problems associated with a vehicle in the water can be avoided if rescuers first carefully evaluate the situation and develop a definitive plan before attempting any rescue. Considerations include:

1. Risk/benefit
2. Rescue versus body recovery
3. Question witnesses
4. Where and in what condition are the victims?
5. Is the vehicle partially submerged?
6. Is the vehicle fully submerged? (The chance of an air pocket existing is very slim.)
7. What is the likely condition of the vehicle based on mechanism of impact?
8. What are the water conditions? (swift, cold, warm)

### **Assessing the Victim**

Once the rescuer(s) have reached the victim, they should do an immediate assessment of the victim; a quick assessment of the ABC's and the exact method of entrapment. If the victim is conscious, the rescuer should determine if the victim can assist in his/her own rescue. If the victim is unconscious, a rapid removal is warranted. The victim should be brought to shore as soon as possible.

### **Phase IV: Termination**

Command should begin termination as soon as possible after the victim has been removed from the water. This shall include securing all the equipment used for the rescue and personnel accountability. Members should not become part of a towing operation to remove vehicles from the water. One company should stand by for rescue if a tow truck driver insists on retrieving the vehicle.