WATER RESCUE RESPONSE SOG

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Stoney Point Fire Department that are trained as Surface Water Rescue Technician and Rescue Technicians and responsible for emergency response.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a guideline for conducting all water rescue and or recovery operations.

DEFINITIONS

SHALL – Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) – Documents that help establish how an organization will operate and how its members are expected to carry out specific duties outlined in general terms.

Water rescue – an operation where there is the possibility of saving the life of someone trapped in a situation involving water.

Water recovery – an operation where the victim is already deceased, or there is no reasonable expectation of saving the victim's life.

Standing water – water without a current.

Running water – water with a current.

PFD – personal flotation device.

Policy Number

5E.002

STANDARD RESPONSE

Upon receipt of a call for a water rescue, Cumberland Communications will dispatch Stations 13 or 19 to respond with adequate resources to affect the water rescue. A medic unit will also be dispatched. The normal response for a water rescue is 1376, 1st Out Engine at either station and Boat 13 along with the on call Chief Duty Officer. (This SOG does not apply to water rescues from Swimming Pools) If additional assistance is needed have Cumberland Communications dispatch the next closest certified Rescue Unit from:

1. Fayetteville Fire Department (R-8, R-14 & Boats)
2. Eastover Fire Department
3. Cotton Fire Department (461 & Boat)
4. Vander Fire Department
5. Fort Bragg Fire Department (Rescue 1 & Boat)

6. Hope Mills Fire Department (For Diving and underwater recovery Operations)
7. Fayetteville Police Department Dive Team (For Diving and underwater recovery Operations)
8. Cumberland County Sheriff's Office Dive Team (For Diving and underwater recovery Operations)

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A water rescue incident is best organized into four phases.

1. The first phase involves fire personnel arriving on scene, initiating command, and performing a size up.

2. The second phase includes pre-rescue operations to prepare fire personnel for victim removal.

3. The third phase includes rescue operations and victim removal.

4. The fourth phase involves termination of the incident.

SIZE UP

The first phase involves fire/rescue personnel arriving on scene, initiating command, and performing a size up. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase one of a water rescue.

1. First arriving company officer should take Command and begin an immediate size-up of the situation.

2. Secure responsible party or witness. Command should secure a witness as soon as possible after arriving on scene. This will help in identifying the problem and locating the victim.

3. Assess the hazards. Command should do an immediate assessment of the present hazards. Command **WILL** assign an individual as the **Safety Officer** during all Surface Water Rescue Operations.

The **Safety Officer** will be responsible for identifying the hazards that will hamper or could interfere with rescue operation. If the hazardous cannot be secured the **Safety Officer** will notify all personnel of the hazards and notify Command so that an action plan can be established. Some hazards associated with water rescue operations would be: volume, velocity, and temperature of water, floating debris, unusual drop-offs, hydraulic effects, and depth of water and weather conditions.

4. Decide on rescue or recovery. (All underwater recovery operations will be handled by the closest available Dive Team as listed Section III of the SOG) in 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 quickly.

5. 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.

PRE-RESCUE OPERATIONS

The second phase involves fire personnel preparing to conduct the rescue. Phase two includes making the general area safe, making the rescue area safe, and establishing a Rescue Group. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase two of a water rescue.

1. Make the general area safe. Command or his/her designee should begin to make the general area safe. On water rescue operations, this would include securing the area and not allowing civilian personnel in to the water. In swift-water rescue incidents, Command should assign an **Upstream Lookout** to spot floating debris and notify Command or **Rescue Group**. Command may also want to assign a helicopter the task of aerial recon for spotting hazards.

2. Make the rescue area safe. Command should secure the immediate rescue area. He/she will assign a **Manpower Officer** to account for all personnel working within the rescue area. Personnel working in the rescue area (waters edge) shall have personal protective equipment (PPE); including personal flotation device (PFD) and water rescue helmet, at no time should turn-out gear or fire helmets be worn around the waters edge. If at all possible, the hazards in the rescue area should be secured. If it is not possible, Command or his/her designee shall notify all rescuers in the area of the possible hazards. (Anytime a Firefighter is directly participating in a surface water rescue where he or she must enter into moving water a life line will be affixed and controlled by other rescuers in order to pull the FF to safety if needed).

3. Decide if it is a pre-rescue or recovery situation. Depending on the action plan established, Command may want to establish a **Rescue Team/ Group**. The **Rescue Team/ Group** will be responsible for gathering all equipment and personnel necessary to operate according to the action plan. The **Rescue Team/Group** will assign rescue personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase. The **Rescue Team or Group** should have an alternative action plan should the first choice plan fail. This alternate plan should be communicated to all personnel operating in the rescue area.

4. Consider ambient conditions. Extreme heat or cold will require more rescuers. Consider the affects of rain or snow on the hazard profile. Plan for sufficient lighting for operations extending into the night.

5. Consider the affect on family and friends. Keep the family informed of operations.

6. Assign or coordinate a Public Information Officer to handle the news media if needed or follow standard SPFD PIO Guidelines – If the SPFD responds to another fire district for surface water rescue assistance all PIO functions will be handled by the host department.

Rescue Operations

After pre-rescue operations are complete, **Rescue Group** shall put forth the action plan removal of the victim(s). Rescue operations should be conducted with from low risk to high risk. Rescues should be conducted with the least amount of risk to rescuers necessary to rescue the victim. Low risk operations are not always possible but should be considered first. If the rescue of the victim(s) is only possible by means of a high risk operation, **Rescue Group** shall communicate with Command the risk/benefit of the operation. Command should assign downstream personnel, with throw bags, and an opposite water-side/bank-side Division for incidents involving swift-water rescue. The order of water rescue from low risk to high risk will be:

Talk the Victim into Self Rescue

If possible, the victim can be talked 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.

Reach to the Victim

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.

Throw to the Victim

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. First responders that have had operational level water rescue training should be able to conduct the above rescues without the help of the Stoney Point Advanced Rescue Team (SART). If the victim cannot be reached by either of these methods, Command should consider stopping the operation until units of the
SART arrive. If the operation becomes a high risk one, Command will want the equipment and experience of the SART. After the Technical Rescue Team arrives, Command should discuss with them the action plan. Command should consider re-assigning the **Rescue Group** to a company officer from the SART.

Row to the Victim

If it is determined that a boat based operation shall be run, Command should assign a company on the opposite bank to assist **Rescue Team/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 Team/Group** will be responsible for seeing that the rope system used for the boat based operation is built safe and proper. A minimum of 2 point tether should be built for swift-water operations. **Rescue** should consider personal protective equipment (PPE) for victim(s).

Go to the Victim

If it is not possible to row (boat base operation) to the victim, **Rescue Team/ Group** should consider putting a rescuer in 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.

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, the rescue must be quick. If it has been determined to be an underwater or recovery operation, **Rescue** should notify Command to have a dive team respond to help with the incident. Depending on the length of submersion, The **Rescue Team/Group** will decide on a dive rescue or recovery operation. If the victim can assist in his/her own rescue, the rescuers should proceed with the rescue action plan. The victim should be brought to shore as soon as possible.

As soon as the victim is brought to safety, an assessment should be done by ALS personnel. Treatment shall be administered as per local protocol. If necessary, the victim shall be transported to the appropriate and closest medical facility.

TERMINATION of COMMAND

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. This may also include witnesses, photo's, victim's personal affects or equipment used in the rescue. 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. Command should also consider critical incident stress debriefing for extraordinary or extended operations. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase four of a water rescue.

1. Maintain personnel accountability

2. Maintain equipment accountability. If there has been a fatality, Rescue Group may consider leaving tools and equipment in place for investigative purposes.

3. Re-stock vehicles

4. Consider debriefing

5. Secure the scene

6. Return apparatus and personnel to service

7. The Officer in Charge will prepare and complete the appropriate department NFIRS report.