

## **Blackwood Fire Company Operating Guidelines**

### **1.20 Water Rescue and Recovery Operations**

#### 1.20.1 Scope

This Operating Guideline (OG) will apply to all incidents (except swimming pools) where victims require rescue or recovery from bodies of water.

#### 1.20.2 Definitions. The following definitions are applicable to this OG:

Hot Zone – Water to 20' on shore. Access limited to rescuers in appropriate PPE only. Should be marked as available / possible and access controlled by FD.

Warm Zone – Hot Zone to a location of appropriate dimensions for location of emergency response resources and command facilities. Access limited to emergency response personnel and others authorized by command. Should be clearly marked and access controlled by PD.

Cold Zone – All areas outside of the Warm Zone and for public access.

Rescue – Victim is alive and visible to rescuers or victim was witnessed submerging and down time is less than 60 minutes

Recovery – Obviously deceased body or victim has been missing / submerged for greater than 60 minutes.

Still / Standing Water – A lake, retention pond or similar body of water with no or limited current or movement.

Swift Water Rescue - Refers to rescue of live victims from flowing water in which the current, depth, floating or submerged hazards, contamination, and / or other risks exist for rescuers or victims.

Unified Command (UC) - The UC is responsible for overall management of the incident. The UC directs incident activities, including development and implementation of overall objectives and strategies, and approves ordering and releasing of resources. Members of the UC work together to develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations. While cooperative decision making is the goal, there will always be a "Lead Agency" with final

authority in the decision making process. This will be the representative of the Lead Agency.

Lead Agency – The agency in the UC with statutory authority for the incident. This may be authority / responsibility may be determined by law, local emergency plan or SOP.

Flood Rescue - The evacuation and or rescue of persons and or property from a moving water situation. Floods may very well include swift water circumstances, but are usually referencing larger areas. Floods may result from weather or man made circumstances.

Ice Rescue – The evacuation and or rescue of persons from a frozen or partially frozen body of water.

### 1.20.3 Incident Management

- 1.20.3.1 Unified Command (UC) will be established at a central location immediately upon the arrival of the following components:
- Senior Local Fire District Officer
  - Senior Police Officer
  - EMS Supervisor
- 1.20.3.2 The Lead Agency in the UC will be incident dependent and will generally follow the following protocol:
- Active Rescue – Fire Department Senior Officer
  - Recovery / Crime Scene / Missing Person – Police Department Senior Officer/ Supervisor
- 1.20.3.3 Command Post Operations
- Determine the lead agency based on incident specific information.
  - Minimum CP requirements will be one PD car and one FD command vehicle.
  - Consider response of Police and Fire Command Post Vehicles
  - All UC components must operate from the CP
  - Review the IAP with all UC components
  - Review all incident facilities and locations.
  - Due to extensive and mostly separate Police and Rescue activities it may be appropriate to create Police and Rescue Branches that will supervise

agency specific groups and divisions rather than to supervise all operations with a single Ops Chief.

- Map / Chart the incident organization and scene to ensure that each area of responsibility is supervised as appropriate by a Branch, Division or Group

- 1.20.3.4 The Operations Chief will implement the overall IAP and coordinate actions through the Police and Rescue Branches.
- 1.20.3.5 The Planning Chief will monitor the overall situation, track assigned resources and coordinate activities for future operational periods
- 1.20.3.6 The Incident Safety Officer (ISO) will report to UC and independently review the IAP and overall activities for adherence to safe operating procedures. The ISO will also monitor environmental conditions and make suggestions on alteration of the IAP based on current or predicted conditions.
- 1.20.3.7 The Rescue Branch will coordinate all activities related to the physical rescue / recovery operation and will report to Operations.
- 1.20.3.8 The Police Branch will coordinate all activities related to scene control, investigation / intelligence and victim / family assistance.
- 1.20.3.9 Resource Ordering  
Since most resources necessary for these incidents will be requested through Camden County, all resource ordering will be coordinated through the Fire Department component of UC. OEM should be consulted on all issues where materials or services must be purchased. Resources ordered before the UC is established will be communicated at initial meeting for coordination (ie. PD requests NJSP helicopter, EMS requests additional ambulances)
- 1.20.3.10 The use of mobile command post vehicles for police and fire is required in most cases for sufficient communications capabilities.
- 1.20.3.11 Resources (NJSP, etc.) which do not utilize common frequencies will either provide frequency information for programmable radios or dispatch a ground unit to the CP for communications.

#### 1.20.4 Response Actions

1.20.4.1 Where possible, personnel should don correct PPE for the incident prior to response.

1.20.4.2 Attempt to determine the exact location of visible victim(s), or the last known location of submerged victim(s).

1.20.4.3 Consider alternate response for boats if water is not accessible from reported rescue site.

1.20.4.4 Consider additional resources such as swiftwater, SCUBA or Aviation, based on incident specific reports.

1.20.4.5 Consider locations for minimum facilities such as Command Post, Staging and Marine Division (boats)

#### 1.20.4.6 Immediate Arrival Actions

- Deny access to the hot zone
- Remove spontaneous rescuers from hot zone if possible or without jeopardizing additional victims
- Locate the victim based on observation, witness or bystander reports
- Attempt to determine number of victims
- Question witnesses and hold for PD
- Make initial “rescue or recovery” determination.
- Determine incident type
  - Standing Water
  - Swift Water
  - Flood
  - Ice
- Request appropriate resources
- Develop and implement IAP after risk assessment using following incident specific guidelines:

#### 1.20.5 Incident Specific Guidelines

1.20.5.1 Still / Standing Water Rescue  
Minimum Hot Zone PPE – Type III / V Rescue PFD (worn), rescue helmet

Thermal protection is dependent on combined water and air temperatures. Appropriate thermal protection (drysuit, exposure / ice suit) is required when the combination of air and water temperature is below 130 degrees F.

Minimum body / thermal protection when temperature is above 130 degrees F would be shirt / shorts / tight fitting athletic shoes or water rescue boots

#### Surface Victim

Reach with poles, ladders, inflated fire hose

Utilize throw bags

Prepare to deploy boats or PWC

#### Submerged Victim

Immediately request dispatch of a Dive Rescue Team

Interview witnesses at location where they last saw the

victim

Triangulate last known location by combining witness

directions

Mark last known location with buoy for rescue divers

Conduct search operations from the surface

Search operations should be conducted by walking into the water or using boats and conducting subsurface poling for the victim.

Investigation of contacts with unknown underwater objects should be made using extreme caution by a tethered swimmer.

#### 1.20.5.2

#### Trapped Victim -Moving Water

Immediately request the dispatch of a Swift Water Rescue

Team

Attempt to get PFD to victim

Attempt to reach victim with throw lines

Deploy shore teams to both sides of rescue if possible

Deploy downstream shore teams with flotation and throw

bags

#### 1.20.5.3

Ice Rescue – Minimum Hot Zone PPE - Exposure Suit

Minimum Rescue Swimmer PPE – Ice Rescue Suit

- Reference Ice Rescue Operations OG 1.21
- Ice Rescue Operations follow the standard Reach / Throw / Row / Go protocol, however, actions to quickly and decisively make contact with the victim and provide positive buoyancy should not be delayed while other techniques are attempted.
- Tethered rescue swimmers in appropriate PPE and an ice rescue sled should be immediately deployed

due to effects of cold water and ability for victims to cooperate or assist in their own rescue.

- Command may consider extending rescue time period based on cold water recovery.
- EMS should be established in the warm zone and ready to accept a patient suffering from hypothermia.
- Extreme care should be taken in the handling of a near drowning victim from ice or cold water. Victims should be treated as severe trauma victims and handled carefully.

#### 1.20.6 Victim Recovery

- 1.20.6.1 Lifesaving actions will commence immediately upon recovery of a victim within the "Rescue" time period as determined by UC.
- 1.20.6.2 The UC will be notified immediately upon location of either a viable victim or an obvious body recovery.
- 1.20.6.3 Rescue personnel will not immediately remove an obviously deceased victim without UC authorization.
- 1.20.6.4 Operations will coordinate via Police and Rescue branches to allow for the use of rescue resources to conduct investigation activities.

#### 1.20.7 Extended Operations

- 1.20.7.1 When a rescue is not made in the "rescue" time period, UC will begin to consider extended operations.
- 1.20.7.2 The Planning Chief will be provided with an overview of UC intentions and begin planning the next Operational Period.
- 1.20.7.3 The Operations Chief will continue to implement the current IAP for the active Operational Period through Demobilization.
- 1.20.7.4 If there will be a period of inactivity prior to the next Operational Period (i.e. suspension of search due to darkness), the Planning Chief (if possible) will develop an IAP, including required resources, prior to Demobilization.

1.20.7.5 If the IAP for the next Operational Period is approved by UC prior to Demobilization, a short brief should be conducted with on-location resources to be utilized in that period. This brief should contain as a minimum:

- Requested resources
- Muster time
- Muster location
- Overview of planned actions

#### 1.20.8 Demobilization

1.20.8.1 UC will remain in place through the end of Demobilization

1.20.8.2 Operations will direct branches through Demobilization process

1.20.8.3 Divisions and groups will account for all resources and report through the chain of command

1.20.8.4 UC will ensure a final accountability of resources and equipment is conducted prior to termination.

1.20.8.5 UC will terminate the incident based on input from Branches through the Operations Chief.