



## Standard Operating Guideline

### Water Rescue



### PURPOSE

This document is intended to establish basic Standard Operating Guidelines and procedures for water rescue response operations. They are designed to be applied generally. They may be modified as situations dictate.

### SCOPE

This guideline applies to water rescue responses (WR-1) and (WR-2).

### BACKGROUND

There are two types of water rescue responses:

Water Rescue (WR-1): Victim is reported OUT of the water.

Water Rescue (WR-2): Victim is reported IN the water.

A reported drowning in a swimming pool will be dispatched as a medical aid.

Water rescue incidents (WR-2) are known to require large numbers of specialized resources due to unreliable victim location reporting, geographical challenges and the dynamic environment.

### OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. The Incident Commander (IC) will ensure proper resources are responding and/or released based upon the incident.
2. Personnel shall wear the proper water rescue personal protective equipment (PPE) within 10 feet of the water's edge. Structural PPE shall NOT be worn within 10 feet of the water's edge unless approved by the Incident Commander.

#### **Minimum PPE:**

- **Agency approved personal floatation device (PFD) within 10 feet of the water's edge (Type 3, Type 5 or equivalent).**
  - **Agency approved water draining head protection.**
  - **Agency approved thermal protection according to the incident (dry suit and liner or wet suit).**
  - **Agency approved foot protection (water booties or athletic shoes).**
3. Ensure personnel are qualified to perform their assigned task



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4. Attempt to mitigate all water rescue incidents using low to high risk rescue options, considering risk benefit analysis for victims and rescuers. IC should consider recovery versus rescue operations if victim or victims' have been underwater in excess of 1 hour.
5. Ensure safety in the following order:
  - Self safety
  - Team safety
  - Victim safety

### OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

1. Identify and confirm victim or victims' location and conduct victim profile.
2. Consider Engines on both sides of the river (RR & RL) for moving water.
3. Provide for adequate downstream protection for victims and rescuers.
4. Ensure qualified personnel are performing the low to high risk options.
5. Provide adequate upstream protection for personnel on the incident.
6. Be prepared to activate backup plans within the incident.
7. Provide for victim or victims' egress and/or transport.

### PROCEDURES

1. Dispatch for WR-1:
  - Engine
  - Medic
  - Boats (2)
    - Boat crews bring water rescue gear, throw bags, flotation devices etc.
    - The second due Boat should consider staging at the launch point.
  - Battalion Chief
2. Dispatch for WR-2:
  - Engines (2) the two most appropriate Engines, IC to consider RR & RL.



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- Boats (2) closest to reported location or best access.
    - Second boat should operate downstream of reported location for safety of first boat. This will speed a hasty search.
  - Helicopter
    - Metro Fire Copter when available.
    - Law Enforcement Copter when available.
  - Battalion Chief
  - Medic
  - D.A.R.T (special call by the Incident Commander)
  - Rescue Company (special call by the Incident Commander)
3. Dispatch for confirmed death / victim recovery underwater.
- These incidents are under law enforcement jurisdiction. All considerations for crime scene preservation should be taken.
  - A boat may be dispatched to support these operations for recovery or investigations. Local Fire Agency participation is at the discretion of the Fire Chief having jurisdiction.

#### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Each agency shall have a certification and qualification process for Swiftwater Rescuers and Boat Operators.
2. Each Agency should use the principles of training and response as out lined in the following Firescope Documents:

ICS –SF-SAR-020-1  
ICS –US&R 120-2  
ICS –US&R-120-1

These documents also provide definitions and response matrixes for modeling in the event of a large scale flooding event.



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**Signature Page**

The Undersigned Fire Chiefs approve of the content in this document.

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Tracey Hansen, Fire Chief  
Cosumnes Fire Department

Ron Phillips, Fire Chief  
City of Folsom Fire Department

Walt White, Fire Chief  
Sacramento Fire Department

Mark Wells, Fire Chief  
Sacramento Metro Fire District

Jeff Metzinger, Fire Chief  
Sacramento County Airports

Teresa Murray, Chief Executive  
Director, SRFECC

Michael Kaslin, Unit Chief  
Cal Fire AEU