3.5.3.2 Water Rescue

	YOUR ORGANIZATION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

TITLE: Water Rescue	**SECTION/TOPIC:** Special Rescue Operations
NUMBER: 3.5.3.2	**ISSUE DATE:**
	REVISED DATE:
PREPARED BY: X Preparer	**APPROVED BY:** X Approver
These SOPs/SOGs are based on FEMA guidelines FA-197	

1.0 POLICY REFERENCE

CFR	
NFPA	
NIMS	

2.0 PURPOSE

This standard operating procedure/guideline addresses response to and operations during surface, swift water, or dive rescues; may include specific information about equipment use and maintenance.

3.0 SCOPE

This SOP/SOG pertains to all personnel in this organization.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

These definitions are pertinent to this SOP/SOG.

5.0 PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

5.1 <u>Response to and Operations during Surface, Swift Water, or Dive Rescues</u>:

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Phase I Arrive on scene. Take command. Size up.

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

B. Assess the need for additional resources.
Command should immediately begin assessing the need for additional resources. If additional resources are necessary, Command should put in an early call for them. If later, it is determined that they are not necessary, Command can put those units back in service.

C. Assess the hazards.
Command should do an immediate assessment of the present hazards. Command may want to assign an individual the **Safety Sector**. **Safety Sector** will be responsible for identifying the hazards present and to have them secured if possible. If it is not possible to secure hazards, **Safety Sector** 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.

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 quick.

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. 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 Sector** to spot floating debris and notify Command or **Extrication Sector.** Command may also want to assign a helicopter the task of aerial recon for spotting hazards.

B. Make the rescue area safe.
Command should secure the immediate rescue area. He/she may want to assign a **Lobby Sector** 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, or appropriate SCUBA gear during dive rescue/recovery operations. 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.

C. Pre-rescue/Recovery.
Depending on the action plan established, Command may want to establish an **Extrication Sector. Extrication Sector** will be responsible for gathering all equipment and personnel necessary to operate according to the action plan. **Extrication Sector** will assign rescue personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase. **Extrication Sector s**hould have an alternative action plan should be communicated to all personnel operating in the rescue area.

Phase III Rescue Operations

After pre-rescue operations are complete, **Extrication Sector** shall put forth the action plan for the removal of the victim(s). Rescue operations should be conducted from low risk to high risk order. Rescues should be conducted with the least amount of risk to the rescuer necessary to rescue the victim. Low risk operations are not always possible by means of a high risk operation, **Extrication Sector** 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 sector for incidents involving swift-water rescue. The order of water rescue from low risk to high risk will be:

TALK — Talke 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 — 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 — 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 Technical Rescue Team (T.R.T). If the victim cannot be reached by either of these methods, Command should consider stopping the operation until units of the T.R.T. arrive. If the operation becomes a high risk one, Command will want the equipment and experience of the T.R.T. After the Technical Rescue Team arrives, Command should discuss with them the action plan. Command should consider re-assigning the **Extrication Sector** to a company officer from the T.R.T. The next order of water rescue from low risk to high risk would be:

ROW — If it is determined that a boat based operation shall be run, Command should assign

a company on the opposite bank to assist **Extrication Sector** in establishing an anchor for a rope system. The company on the opposite bank will be made aware of the action plan. **Extrication Sector** 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. **Extrication** should consider personal protective equipment (PPE) for victim(s).

GO — If it is not possible to ROW (boat base operation) to the victim, **Extrication Sector** 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 quickrelease 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.

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 **Extrication Sector** and the pilot to determine the risk/benefit of the use of a helo. If the pilot says he/she can do the operation, Command should consider it.

Extrication should assign rescuers to the helicopter and discuss with the pilot and the rescuers the specific action plan. **Extrication Sector,** or his/her designee should address the weight and balance considerations. Command 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.

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, the rescue must be quick. If it has been determined to be an underwater or recovery operation, **Extrication** should proceed with a dive operation (see **Dive Operations**).
Depending on the length of submersion, **Extrication Sector** 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.

TREATMENT

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 facility.

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. 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 activating the C.I.S.D. for extraordinary or extended operations.

I. PREPARE FOR TERMINATION

A. Personnel accountability.
B. Equipment accountability. If there has been a fatality, **Extrication Sector** may consider leaving equipment in place for investigative purposes.
C. Re-stock vehicles.
D. Consider debriefing.
E. Secure the scene. Return to service.

Additional Considerations:

A. HEAT. Consider rotation of crews.
B. COLD. Consider the affects of hypothermia on victim and rescuers.
C. RAIN/SNOW. Consider the affects of rain or snow on the hazard profile.
D. TIME OF DAY. Is there sufficient lighting for operations extending into the night.
E. Consider the affect on family and friends; keep family informed.
F. Consider news media; assign a P.I.O.

5.2 <u>Use of Equipment during Water Rescues</u>:

5.3 <u>Maintenance of Equipment used during Water Rescues</u>: