WATER RESCUE SAFETY
3000-03

Water Rescue Sequence. A low- to high-risk sequence by which rescuers should progress while attempting to remove victims from danger, including: talk, reach, throw, wade, row, go, and helo, as described below:

1. **Talk**: verbally instruct victim(s) on how to remove themselves from danger.

2. **Reach**: use an object, e.g., a pike pole, ladder, an inflated fire hose, etc., to extend the shore personnel’s reach to victim(s).

3. **Throw**: propel an object, manually or mechanically, to victim(s) to facilitate rescue efforts.

4. **Wade**: walk through the water, no deeper than waist-high, and only in **still** or **moving water**, **never swift water**, to reach the victim(s)

5. **Row**: use a rescue craft to access victim(s).

6. **Go**: enter the water, and if necessary, swim to the victim(s).

7. **Helo**: use a helicopter to access the victim(s).

Policy. Personnel within the warm zone must wear the appropriate water rescue PPE. Personnel wearing helmets, fire turnout gear, pants or coat, or any other large, heavy, or bulky clothing must not enter the warm zone.

Procedure.

I. First Arriving Unit.

a. **Position apparatus to ensure maximum safety, taking into account rising water, highway safety, power lines, and any other hazardous conditions.**

b. **To determine whether the water is rising or receding, and at what rate, the officer will note the time, water level, or the edge of the water at a safe and convenient location.**

c. **The first arriving officer will establish a warm zone and restrict access to operations and technician-level personnel.**
d. The first arriving officer will determine the victim's exact location or point last seen, using witness interview and visual check. All witnesses should be interviewed by Fire/Rescue personnel individually, and not as a group.

II. Initial Operations.

a. Personnel must wear water rescue PPE before entering the warm zone.

b. Command must make a hazard evaluation of the scene to determine the proper actions as dictated by the water rescue sequence or recovery operation. This evaluation will include reviewing available resources and personnel training levels on the scene or responding.

c. Command will assign a firefighter/rescuer to attempt to verbally contact victims to reassure them and direct them to attempt a self-rescue, and attempt to provide any available flotation device to stranded person(s) as soon as possible.

d. Personnel in the warm zone should attempt a shore-based rescue by any safe technique available.

e. Deploy at least one pair of rescuers downstream as backup rescuers, as additional units arrive. These rescuers must be prepared to conduct a shore-based rescue, if required, and have a means to communicate with other rescue personnel and Command.

f. Deploy at least one pair of rescuers upstream of the victim to serve as spotters and provide sufficient warning of floating debris, as additional units arrive. Rescuers must have a means to communicate with other rescue personnel and Command.

g. If necessary, rescue personnel will be directed to the next downstream access point, and to both river left and river right sides of the body of water. These personnel must report to Command when in position, and await further instruction. Downstream personnel must be ready to perform rescue actions if the upstream crew misses the victim, and must have a means to communicate with other rescue personnel and Command.

h. If swift water conditions are not present, operations-level personnel may wade into the water if no other rescue method is available. However, if at any time, rescue personnel encounter: water depth above their waist line; water force strong enough to make walking or standing difficult; or if their feet and/or legs meet resistance or encounter an object that causes extremity entrapment, including sediment beds, they should retreat and await the arrival of the appropriate level of resources, or for conditions to improve.
i. If swift water conditions are present, personnel must limit their access to the cold and warm zones and await the arrival of swift water rescue trained personnel.

j. **Vehicle in Water.** If the vehicle is determined to be abandoned, if it is safe to do so, personnel may wade out and mark the vehicle with fire line tape. This tape should be applied to an antenna, a license plate, or a door mirror. The officer will record the location, type, and color of the vehicle, and forward this information to communications.

Boat Operations. Basic boat operations must include at least two boats, each providing RIT capabilities for the other. Each boat must maintain current knowledge of the status and location of its partnered boat by maintaining visual and communications contact. Boat operations will normally begin at victim(s) point last seen.

a. Determine the best boat entry point.

b. Establish an entry control person, who will conduct accountability checks of deployed resources at 20 minute intervals.

Recovery Operations.

a. Victims who have been reported as submerged in cold water will be treated as viable, and rescue must be attempted. The victim's submersion time and water conditions will be considered, and will include the standard medical protocol.

b. If a determination has been made that the victim is deceased, and the incident is a body recovery, the rescuers will ensure that the body remains in place until the arrival of the law enforcement agency with authority over the location.

c. Every attempt must be made to limit the number of personnel entering the warm and hot zones.