

## 10.5 WATER RESCUE OPERATIONS

- 10.5.1 Water Rescue Operations shall be conducted with fire fighter safety and survival considered and rescue of survivable victims as a priority. Water Rescue Operations for animals shall be conducted with fire fighter safety and survival as a priority.
- 10.5.2 The philosophy of operations for Water Rescue Operations, whenever possible shall include, **REACH, THROW, and THEN GO**. The IC shall evaluate the circumstances and develop a strategy that utilizes reaching the victim(s) with poles or other devices first, utilizing throwable devices second, and finally, if necessary deploying a trained fire fighter into the water utilizing various other tools to perform a rescue. The IC shall ensure adequate resources have arrived on the scene before implementing **GO** operations so as not to place the victim in further jeopardy or to unnecessarily risk fire fighter safety.
- 10.5.3 The IC shall ensure that adequate scene control is established soliciting assistance from police and other agencies as necessary, so as to not allow untrained or unequipped, would be rescuers, from becoming victims. The IC shall ensure a **HOT ZONE** and a **COLD ZONE** is established. The **HOT ZONE** is defined as the area including the water and the corridor adjacent to the water where access is being made. The **COLD ZONE** is defined as any area around the emergency scene where personnel are not directly in danger of coming in contact with the water or interfering directly with rescue operations. When possible, the IC should establish a **HOT/COLD ZONE** perimeter by utilizing barrier tape, cones or other control devices.
- 10.5.4 The IC shall ensure that all fire department personnel operating at the scene of a water rescue incident wear proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for each specific assignment. If necessary, a Safety Officer will be designated to assist with this task. Fire Department personnel entering into the water shall don a mask, snorkel, and fins. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL ANY PERSONNEL ENTER INTO OR ON THE WATER WEARING FIRE DEPARTMENT TURNOUT GEAR.** Fire Department personnel utilizing a boat shall don a Personal Flotation Device (PFD). All other personnel operating within a **HOT ZONE**, including personnel from other agencies shall don a PFD.
- 10.5.5 Any and all fire department personnel operating within the **HOT ZONE** shall be capable of recognizing, maintaining, and operating all water rescue equipment used by the department.

- 10.5.6 The IC shall "special call" an Underwater Recovery Team as necessary or when an actual water rescue situation is confirmed.
- 10.5.7 When a water rescue is confirmed, fire department personnel should immediately upon arrival, retrieve the fire department rescue boat from the apparatus and prepare to launch should it be needed for the Water Rescue Operations.
- 10.5.8 Whenever possible, rescuers should attempt *Shore Based* rescues first by using poles, floats, throw bags, etc. to make contact with the victim. Whenever possible rescuers should avoid entering the water.
- 10.5.9 Should *Shore Based* rescue be unsuccessful or impossible, a *Tethered Boat* should be utilized by securing a tether line to a rescue boat and deploying it to make contact with the victim(s).
- 10.5.10 Should *Shore Based* and/or *Tether Boat* rescues be unsuccessful or impossible, a *Free Boat* should be utilized, with the boat being powered by a motor or rescuers paddling to contact the victim(s).
- 10.5.11 If all of the listed rescue attempts have failed or are impossible, as a last resort, *In-Water Contact* may be made with the victim. *In-Water Contact* should be made by trained personnel by swimming to the victim, physically contacting him/her, and returning the victim to shore.
- 10.5.12 When a water rescue is confirmed and rescuers must enter the water, either of two methods may be utilized. When water is no deeper than chest level, the *Shallow Water Search Method* shall be utilized. The operation is performed by rescuers linking arms in a straight line, wading across the area in formation while making circular motions with their feet just above the surface bottom as to not disturb the bottom. When rescuers reach water above chest level of the shortest rescuer in line, the rescue shall be halted and the *Deep Water Search Method* shall be implemented at that location.
- 10.5.13 The *Deep Water Search Method* shall be utilized in operations being conducted in water above chest level. **TRAINED SWIMMERS ONLY SHALL PERFORM THE *Deep Water Search Method*** Rescuers in a line shall perform surface dives to the bottom and complete a predetermined number of strokes before surfacing. Rescuers should use sweeping, semi-circular motions with their arms just above the bottom as to not disturb the bottom. Rescuers must stay close enough together to slightly overlap each other's sweeps. Rescuers should complete the designated number of strokes and come almost straight up, move back six feet, and start again to cover the area thoroughly.

- 10.5.14 The IC should consider expanding the Incident Command Management Structure to include at least the following key positions: a) Rescue Operations, b) Staging Division, c) Safety Officer, d) Planning Officer, e) Accountability Officer, and f) Rehab Division.
- 10.5.15 The IC shall be responsible for assigning a member of the emergency response organization to conduct an interview of witnesses to determine the *number of victims, where they were last observed, description of clothing, and any other information* that might be helpful in completing an effective rescue. The member(s) assigned to conduction interviews shall become a part of the planning function, may be assigned as the Planning Officer by the IC, and may be from another agency such as the police department.
- 10.5.16 The Staging Division shall ensure incoming apparatus and other emergency vehicles are logged in and staged so that emergency scene access is kept clear.
- 10.5.17 The IC and/or Rescue Operations Officer shall ensure a Fire fighter Assistance and Search Team (FAST) is assembled with any and all equipment as necessary to rescue a fire fighter deployed for the original rescue, should he/she become a victim.
- 10.5.18 Should a Water Rescue Operation warrant the use of tether line, four basic signals shall be used between the deployed rescuer and the line tender(s):

#### **ARMS SIGNALS**

- STOP = Arm straight up with fist.
- SLAKEN the LINE = Wave arm up and down vertically.
- SLOWLY PULL & TAKE UP TENSION = Arm up making circular motion.
- RESCUER NEEDS HELP = Arm up sweeping side to side over the head.

#### **LINE-PULL SIGNALS**

- STOP = One (1) pull.
- SLAKEN the LINE = Two (2) pulls.
- SLOWLY PULL & TAKE UP TENSION = Three (3) pulls.
- RESCUER NEEDS HELP = Four (4) pulls, Four (4) pulls repeated.

#### **WHISTLE SIGNALS**

- STOP = One (1) blast.
- SLAKEN the LINE = Two (2) blasts.
- SLOWLY PULL & TAKE UP TENSION = Three (3) blasts.

- RESCUER NEEDS HELP = Four (4) blasts, Four (4) blasts repeated.

10.5.19 Rescuers reaching a victim should exercise extreme caution when handling the victim so as to not aggravate a potential injury. Rescuers should attempt to conduct a primary assessment for potential injuries unless the situation warrants immediate and rapid removal of the victim to avoid putting the victim in further jeopardy, or to avoid unnecessary risk to the fire fighter.

10.5.20 No member of the fire department shall perform a high-risk task for which they are not trained. Any assigned fire department rescuer, may at anytime, decline participation in the rescue operation due to extreme danger, physical or mental incapacity, or another serious safety issue.

10.5.21 Rescuers, after being deployed into the water, shall be required to report to Rehab immediately after exiting the water for medical evaluation.

10.5.22 It is essential that the IC use the WTFD IMS Work Sheet for a Warm Water Rescue Operation. If necessary, the IC may designate a member of the emergency response organization to fill in the work sheet during the incident. The IC should anticipate at least all three (3) fire companies, police department personnel, and Basic and Advance Life Support Units to be involved in the rescue operation. Coordination of all agencies to facilitate a safe and effective rescue is paramount and rests with the fire department incident commander.