



Northeast Fire Department Association

Operations

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Tactical Guidelines: Swift Water Rescue

Approved by: Chief Wes Rhodes

NEFDA President

I. Purpose

The intent of this Standard Operating Procedure is to provide each NEFDA city with an understanding of the terminology, responsibilities, pre-arrival needs, and method of operation of the NEFDA Swift Water Rescue Teams.

II. Terminology

- A.** SWRT – Swift Water Rescue Team. Made up of at least 3 swift water technicians (2 of which are boat operators) and a rescue boat.
- B.** Team Member – Personnel who have been assigned by their member department to the SWRT.
- C.** Boat Operator- SWRT Team member that has completed Day 1 and Day 2 of swift water boat operations. Members with only day 1 of boat operations only operate boats in static water.
- D.** SWRT Coordinator – responsible for the training, attendance at called meetings, and to insure post response critiques are completed.
- E.** PFD – personal flotation device.
- F.** Two in/Two out Rule – before a SWRT gets in the water (2 in), a second SWRT (2 out) should be operational to support the first team.
- G.** Upstream – the direction from which the water is flowing.
- H.** Downstream – the direction in which the water will flow.
- I.** Rescue Group Safety Officer - responsible for overall incident site safety, and will notify incident command of any unsafe conditions or operations they observe. Shall be including in the decision making process on any and all operations, including SWRT briefings. Shall be responsible for time keeping of the event. Shall have the authority to stop any and all activities that he/she determines to be unsafe.
- J.** Clean Water – water in which the SWRT is operating in that has not been exposed to hazardous materials.
- K.** Dirty Water – water in which the SWRT is operating in that has potentially been exposed to hazardous materials including but not limited to areas of sewage contamination as well as agricultural and chemical contamination.

III.

Responsibilities of Departments with SWRT

- A.** Current NEFDA Departments that have SWRTs are: Haltom, Hurst, Bedford, & Euless
- B.** Each SWRT department shall certify those members who have satisfactorily completed the technical rescue training requirements that meet or exceed NFPA 1670 & 1006
- C.** Each SWRT department shall appoint a team member to act as the city's swift water team coordinator
- D.** Each SWRT department shall attempt to maintain a minimum number of SWRT Technicians on duty each shift. The minimum attempted shall be 3 SWRT Technicians on each shift with a minimum of 2 boat operators.

IV.

Deployment

- A.** The East response group shall consist of the cities of Hurst and Euless.
- B.** The West response group shall consist of the cities of Bedford and Haltom City.
 - 1.** East Response Group (Responds to Swift water events in: Trophy Club, Grapevine, Southlake, Colleyville, Euless, Bedford and Hurst.
 - 2.** West Response Group (Responds to Swift water events in: Westlake, Keller, Watauga, North Richland Hills, Richland Hills, Roanoke and Haltom City.

V.

Pre-Arrival Needs

- A.** Establish a staging area.
- B.** Establish a medical/triage group (with an MICU on scene).
- C.** If there is a possibility of hazardous materials in the water, Command should request Hazmat.

VI.

Method of Operation

- A.** SWRT will respond on NRHW 7.
- B.** SWRT will report to Command for incident briefing
- C.** SWRT will formulate an IAP that can be approved or disapproved by Command.
- D.** SWRT will operate as a Rescue Group with a Team Member as Rescue Group Leader.
- E.** Only the SWRT Rescue Group should operate in the exclusion (hot) zone.

VII.

SWRT Operations

- A.** There should be at least 3 SWRT members (with two boat operators) in a boat with equipment (throw bags, air horn, rope and carabineer) stored and tied into the boat.
- B.** Rescuer safety should always be considered
 - 1.** Always consider self- rescue first.
 - 2.** Look out for other rescuers second.
 - 3.** Rescue of victim is only after 1 and 2 have been completed.
- C.** No one is allowed within 10 feet of swift water without a PFD. No bunker gear will be worn at a swift water emergency.
- D.** Upstream spotters are in place equipped with radio and whistle before downstream

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operations begin. Downstream rescuers should immediately be notified of large debris coming down stream.

- E.** Downstream backups will be deployed with throw bags. A minimum of two rescuers each with throw bags, whistles and radios should be in place before upstream operations begin.
- F.** Decide on “rescue” or “recovery” based on the conditions present and the hazards associated with a rescue. Command must make the decision to operate in a rescue or recovery mode.
- G.** All SWRT members shall have the proper PPE.
- H.** Keep the rescue simple and safe and use the low to high risk options in order.
 - 1.** Reach
 - 2.** Throw
 - 3.** Row
 - 4.** Go
 - 5.** Helo (helicopter)
- I.** Always have backup plans
- J.** Hand and whistle communication will be important to know. Whistle signals are the following:
 - 1.** One blast – stop
 - 2.** Two blasts – upstream
 - 3.** Three blasts – downstream
 - 4.** Series of three blasts – emergency
 - 5.** One hand in air straight up – distress
 - 6.** One hand on top of head – okay
- K.** Providing PFDs and helmets to the victims should be a priority. This should be completed as soon as possible to help ensure the victims safety.