



CENTRAL ZONE OPERATIONS

ALPINE - BARONA - EL CAJON - LAKESIDE - LA MESA - LEMON GROVE
SAN MIGUEL - SANTEE - SYCUAN - VIEJAS
BONITA - HEARTLAND DISPATCH

B-8 SWIFT WATER RESCUE RESPONSE

PURPOSE

The purpose of the policy is to establish minimum operational capabilities and equipment for all Central Zone Fire Departments to utilize for swift water rescue responses. All Central Zone agencies should train and equip all Type 1 Engines and Truck Companies to operate at the Swift Water Operations level. Nothing in this policy shall prevent a department from exceeding these guidelines. All Central Zone Fire Departments should conduct an annual swift water refresher training.

DEFINITIONS:

Awareness Level Responders: Personnel who operate in support functions and are 10 feet or more away from the swift water hazard. Individuals at the awareness level do not engage in direct rescue and act in a support role.

Operations Level Responders: Personnel who participate in rescue actions that do not require full body contact with fast moving water. Individuals at the operations level may utilize reaching and throwing methods, and walk into still or slow moving, shallow water.

Technician Level Responders: Personnel who are trained to perform contact rescues, via boat or direct entry, in fast moving water.

Attention Signal: Indicated by one whistle blast. All personnel stop work and look to the individual who sounded signal for further direction.

Emergency Signal: Indicated with three repeated whistle blasts. All personnel shall stop work and look to the IC, Rescue Group Supervisor, Safety Officer, or individual who sounded the alarm for further direction.

River Right: The right side of the river or body of water, as viewed from the perspective on an individual looking downstream.

River Left: The left side of the river or body of water, as viewed from the perspective of an individual looking downstream.



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Standing Body of Water (static): Any significant accumulation of water that has little to no movement (i.e.: ponds, lakes, pools, lagoons, and other such wetlands).

Swift Water (dynamic): Water flowing faster than 1.15 mph (according to the NFPA).

Minimum PPE Requirements:

All Central Zone Type 1 Engines, Truck Companies, and Battalion Chief vehicles should be equipped with the following minimum complement of PPE for each crew member assigned to the apparatus:

- USCG approved Type V swift water rescue vest with whistle and strobe light
- Swift water rescue helmet (structure and wild land helmets may not be worn)
- Throw bag with 75' polypropylene hollow braid water rescue rope
- Water rescue footwear (Departments without this should require athletic shoes to be worn)
- Structural and wildland firefighting equipment may not be worn in water rescue environments!

Additional Equipment:

All Type 1 Engines and Truck Companies should carry a complement of Low Angle Rope Rescue Operations (LARRO) equipment to support a swift water rescue evolution. This should include webbing and other anchor supplies, life line, carabineers, MPD's, pulleys, Prussiks, etc. All crews should be able to utilize LARRO equipment to establish anchors, create tension diagonals, and set up mechanical advantage systems to perform shore-based operations or assist specialized rescue teams with technical rescues.

Central Zone Fire Departments are encouraged to carry additional equipment for swift water rescue responses. Suggested items include hose inflators, lifeguard rescue buoys, and ring buoys.

PROCEDURE

Response:

HCFA shall dispatch either a Swift Water or Water Rescue response, depending on the nature of the incident. If water currents and speed, depth, or other hazards have the potential to impact the



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rescue, a swift water response shall be dispatched. The first due company or chief officer shall have the ability to upgrade a water rescue response to a swift water response based on dispatch information or current or predicted weather conditions.

HCFA shall determine if possible the number of victims, and if the victims are stranded in a fixed location or are in moving water. For any reports of a victim in moving water, the first due company or chief officer should consider directing responding units to downstream locations to assist in locating the victims. A helicopter should be considered if conditions allow to help search for and track victims in moving water. The Duty Chief of any potential downstream agencies shall be notified when a victim is possibly in moving water.

HCFA shall notify METRO and SDU to place a technical swift water rescue team on standby whenever a Swift Water response is dispatched. The IC or first due officer should request a technician team be added for any victim in moving water, or any time a victim is located in an area where the expertise and equipment carried by swift water teams may be needed.

Water Response Zones

Hot Zone: Area that is covered by water. Personnel operating in this zone are normally trained at the technician level.

Warm Zone: Area generally within 10 feet of the water's edge. Shore based rescues occur in this zone. All personnel operating in this zone should have the minimum PPE complement identified in this policy and should be trained to the operations level.

Cold Zone: Awareness level personnel operating in a support role. PPE is not required in this zone.

ICS Considerations

The following ICS positions should be considered on swift water rescue responses:

- **IC:** The IC will assume command of the incident.
- **Point Last Seen:** When a victim is reported to be in moving water, a company should be directed to respond to the last know location / RP location to gather information about potential victim(s).
- **Upstream Lookout:** This position shall be established whenever a victim is in moving



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water and / or fire personnel are operating in moving water, and positioned where they can identify any changing conditions or objects in the water that may pose a danger to victims or rescuers. Upstream lookouts must have a whistle and should have communications with rescue group personnel, safety, and the IC.

- **Rescue Group:** Responsible for removing the victim(s) from the hazard. When there are multiple victims or swift water conditions are present, multiple rescue groups may be established. In swift water environments, secondary rescue groups should be established down-stream, in case the primary rescue group is unsuccessful or the victim falls from a fixed location into moving water.
- **Rescue Group Supervisor:** Should be established whenever multiple rescue groups are established.
- **Retrieval Unit:** Positioned to retrieve a victim who is belayed into the shore line with a throw bag, inflated hose, or other rescue device.
- **Downstream Safety:** Responsible for providing shore-based rescue to fire personnel or victims who enter the waterway. Wide streams or access issues may necessitate more than one down-stream safety.
- **Medical Group:** Located in the cold zone and prepared to provide medical care.
- **Safety Officer:** Responsible for overall scene safety.
- **Search:** Units directed to assist in locating potential victims. Search teams should access shorelines and bridges to locate victims. ASTREA or Fire-Rescue helicopters may be utilized to assist with search. Technical water rescue teams may perform water-based boat or PWC searches if conditions allow.
- **DECON:** All urban flood waters should be considered a contaminated environment. A decontamination unit should be established when necessary to rinse all personnel and equipment with fresh water and soap when possible.