

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

Swift Water Rescue Team Daily Operations Guidelines

November 18, 2017

SECTION 1. PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines for the normal day to day operations and responses of the Swift Water Rescue Team to water related incidents.

SECTION 2. APPLICABILITY:

All Swift Water Rescue Team personnel

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS:

- a. **Boat Support Unit (BS)**: A vehicle capable of towing a trailered boat and carrying a Jon Boat or Rapid Response Boat and the ancillary equipment required to support the deployment of boats and associated water rescues. Minimum staffing will consist of 1 Swift Water Boat Operator (SWBO) and 1 Swift Water Boat Crew (SWBC) member.
- b. **Desired Station Staffing Level**: 3 Swift Water Boat Operators, 3 Swift Water Boat Crew members and 1 Swift Water Officer per station.
- c. **High River Levels**: Potomac River water level of 4.5' or greater using the Potomac River Level Gauge at Little Falls Dam.
- d. **Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB)**: A lightweight boat constructed with its sides and bow made of flexible tubes containing pressurized gas.
 1. **IRB- Chesapeake Type**: The larger of the two types of IRB's deployed by the SWRT.
 - A. Max working capacity:
 - i. 12 people
 - ii. 3000 lbs
 2. **IRB- Sled Type**: The smaller of the two types of IRB's deployed by the SWRT.
 - A. Max working capacity:
 - i. 8 people
 - ii. 2000 lbs
- e. **Jon Boat**: A flat-bottomed boat constructed of aluminum, fiberglass or wood with one, two, or three bench seats.
- f. **Level I Dispatch (Ice)**: An incident requiring a consultation with the SWO (SWSL).

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g. Level II Dispatch (Ice): An incident involving a surface or subsurface ice rescue. The MCFRS response will be:

1. 1 SWRT Group
2. 2 closest Operational Boats
3. 1 Manpower Piece
4. 2 Transporting EMS units
 - A. 1 ALS Resource
5. 1 Command Officer

h. Level I Dispatch (Water): An incident requiring a consultation with the SWO (SWSL).

i. Level II Dispatch (Water): An incident on the upper Potomac River or an inland water rescue. These incidents do not involve swift water. The MCFRS response will be:

1. 1 SWRT Group
2. 2 closest Operational Boats
3. 1 Manpower Piece
4. 1 Transporting EMS Unit
5. 1 Command Officer
6. Eagle 1 or other appropriate helicopter resource (for Potomac River)

j. Level III Dispatch (Water): An incident on the lower Potomac River, the upper Potomac River if river levels are 4.5' or greater, the Billy Goat Trail or an inland swift water or flooding rescue. The MCFRS response will be:

1. 2 closest SWRT Groups
2. 1 Manpower Piece
3. 2 Transporting EMS Units
 - A. 1 ALS Resource
4. 1 Command Officer
5. Eagle 1 or other appropriate helicopter resource (for Potomac river)
 - A. Fairfax County, VA (for lower Potomac River if deemed necessary)

k. Level IV Dispatch (Water): An event requiring prolonged activity or a mutual aid type event. These events will require multiple SWRT Groups and call-back of personnel.

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- l. Low River Levels:** Potomac River water level of less than 3.0' using the Potomac River Level Gauge at Little Falls Dam.
- m. Minimum Station Staffing Level:** 2 Swift Water Boat Operators and 2 Swift Water Boat Crew members per station.
- n. Operational Boats:** IRB staffed with 1 Operations level boat operator and 1 Operations level boat crew member who have been trained to a non-swift water level of certification.
- o. Rapid Response Boat (RRB):** A smaller IRB or Jon Boat which can be easily deployed to locations not accessible to the larger rescue boats.
- p. Swift Water:** Water over two feet deep that is flowing at a rate greater than one knot (1.15 mph) and occurring in a natural water course, flood control channel, or a flood-related environment.
- q. Swift Water Boat-** An IRB that has the minimum inventory and is staffed with a trained Swift Water Boat Operator (SWBO) and a Swift Water Boat Crew (SWBC).
- r. Swift Water Officer (SWO):** A senior team SWBO member holding the rank of Lieutenant or higher. The SWO is the overall supervising authority for all SWRT related activities during a given shift countywide. The SWO may be stationed at either Station 10 or 30. During major incidents a SWO will be positioned to coordinate all SWRT resources and responses. If two or more SWO's are working on any given shift, the most senior will be considered the overall authority. Seniority will be determined by:
1. Seniority on SWRT
 2. Rank
 3. County Seniority
- s. Swift Water Boat Crew (SWBC):** The SWBC is responsible for performing water operations of an incident. They are also responsible for any activities which may be required to support water operations, including but not limited to driving vehicles, walking trails and performing EMS duties. The SWBC reports to a SWBO, but may also be called upon to function independently.
- t. Swift Water Boat Operator (SWBO):** The SWBO is responsible for operating the rescue boats and performing any additional water operations of the incident. They are also responsible for any activities which may be required to support water operations, including but not limited to driving vehicles, walking trails and performing EMS duties. The SWBO reports to the SWO (SWSL) or Incident Command. They are in charge of their individual SWRT Unit and may also supervise a SWRT Group. In the absence of a SWO (SWSL), the senior SWBO will function in the capacity of the SWO (SWSL)

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u. Swift Water Shift Leader (SWSL): In the absence of a SWO between Stations 10 and 30, the SWBO at each station with the most seniority **on the SWRT** will be designated the SWSL. The SWSL will be responsible for all SWRT related activities and responses for that station on that particular shift. In the event there are no SWO's at either Station 10 or 30, then the designation of the SWSL with overall responsibility will be determined in the following manner:

1. Seniority on SWRT
2. Rank
3. County Seniority

v. Swift Water Rescue Team (SWRT)- Special Operations Group within MCFRS responsible for all swift water operations.

w. SWRT Group- 2 fully staffed and equipped SWRT units. This may or may not include the designated shift SWO (SWSL).

x. SWRT Unit- A single Boat Support Unit with trailered Swift Water Boat and the accompanying personnel.

y. SWRT Team Leader- The Swift Water Team Leader is responsible for the team's overall function and readiness. The Team Leader reports to the Special Operations Chain of Command, providing Incident Command for Water Rescue Operations as well as serving as a Subject Matter Expert for operations. The Team Leader is responsible for appointing members to fill the various roles of the organizational matrix so that logistical needs are met, rescue tactics are evaluated and modified and there is an accurate keeping of records, as well as other functional necessities. The Team Leader will also provide a command function for multiple Swift Water Groups in the event of a major incident. He/she is responsible for creating a deployment plan for major flooding events, as well as guidelines for daily operations.

SECTION 4. Operational Guidelines

a. Daily

1. The SWO at Station 30 will ensure that the SWRT Daily Roster is completed on the Duty Operations Chief Shift Log by 0730 hours each day. If there is no SWO assigned to Station 30, then the SWSL or their designee is responsible.
2. Non-consolidated personnel who may be utilized as part of response staffing will be listed on the daily lineup showing their station assignment for that given shift.

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3. In the event a SWRT incident requires additional resources, the SWO (SWSL) will request ECC to dispatch these personnel. Non-consolidated SWRT personnel responding will check on the air as "Unit xxx responding with xx personnel as part of Swift Water team staffing". If possible, personnel will respond in utility or secondary vehicles (cars, brush truck).

4. The river level and water temperature will be recorded in each station log book at lineup. The water temperature and river level forecasts can be found on the team website under links. The Potomac River Level Gauge at Little Falls Dam is the sole source for determining river level. If the river level or weather conditions dictate a deviation from normal procedures these possible deviations will be conveyed to personnel.

5. When river levels are 4.5' or greater, the SWO (SWSL) or designee will contact the ECC Supervisor and advise that the entirety of the Potomac River is to be considered swift water and dispatched appropriately.

6. All SWRT members will be responsible for ensuring the SWO (SWSL) is aware of any local flood warnings. If flood warnings exist, the SWRT Pre-Deployment Policy will be initiated.

7. The SWO (SWSL) will check the next shift's lineup schedule to see if minimum daily station staffing levels have been met. If the minimum station staffing level has not been met, recommend to notify Scheduling to correct the problem. If staffing levels cannot be met, the Team Leader will be notified.

8. In the event equipment is damaged during training, on an incident or found at check out, a damage report must be filed on the team website. For damages costing >\$250, the Battalion Chief must be notified so the appropriate documentation can be completed.

9. In the event of an injury occurring during training or on an actual incident, the Team Leader and Team Safety Officer must be notified in addition to the department's established injury reporting procedure.

b. SWRT Response to Surface Water Dispatches

1. **Level I-** The SWO (SWSL) will be contacted for a consultation on a water related issue.

2. **Level II-** Incidents occurring on the upper Potomac or on inland bodies of water. This call type will receive the closest SWRT Group.

3. **Level III-** Incidents occurring on the lower Potomac or in any swift water. This call type will receive 2 SWRT Groups. Each SWRT Group will include an EMS unit as part of its response, **if possible**. This EMS

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unit will be separate from other MCFRS resources, may be staffed by non SWRT personnel and is responsible for the treatment and transport of SWRT personnel should the need arise.

4. Level IV- These incidents involve utilizing the SWRT Pre-Deployment Guidelines for the pre-positioning of personnel and equipment in anticipation of need. These incidents may also involve movement of personnel and equipment for mutual aid. The scope of the response will be determined on a case by case basis.

5. All Incidents, regardless of level, which require responses or activities considered outside normal operational guidelines, will require notification of team leadership.

c. SWRT Response to Ice Dispatch

1. Level I- The SWO (SWSL) will be contacted for a consultation on an ice rescue issue.

2. Level II- Incidents involving a working ice rescue. The response will be 1 SWRT Group.

d. SWRT Group Configuration for Emergency Call Types

1. Inland Dispatch- At least 1 Jon boat or RRB and a SWRT Group capable of being split into two 2- person boat teams.

2. Vehicle in The Water- At least 1 IRB sled and 1 Jon boat or RRB per SWRT Unit.

3. Low River Levels- At least 1 IRB sled and 1 Jon boat or RRB per SWRT Unit.

4. High River Levels- At least 2 IRB.