

<b>HALIFAX FIRE DEPARTMENT</b> <b>SOG 25</b>	<b>WATER/ICE &amp; DIVE RESCUE OPERATIONS</b>
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## **25.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this guideline is to establish a standard to safely and promptly respond to water and ice rescue emergencies.

### **25.1 SCOPE:**

The Halifax Fire Department shall be the lead agency and responsible for water rescues or recoveries in water within the boundaries of Halifax.

The Halifax Police Department shall maintain scene security and securing witnesses. Witness shall be accessible to the I/C and staged near the Command Post.

Scene security of at least 500' X 500' of last known location shall be set up. Transporting witnesses to I/C. Assisting with shuttling divers and equipment and or transportation of injured parties or victims.

All operations shall be approached with a shared responsibility and approached as a unified command system. It is imperative that a ranking Police Officer report to the Command Post.

### **25.2 RESPONSE**

Upon receipt of a call for a water or ice rescue the Duty Shift and All Call shall respond with the appropriate apparatus and equipment based on season and geographic location of incident. On all human rescues or recoveries a box alarm shall be transmitted.

Resources to be considered by priority:

1. Boats, Hovercraft, Ice Sled
2. Dive Unit
3. Ambulance (this may be an ALS unit from M/A)
4. Engine, Forest Fire Unit

Outside Resources to be considered:

- Neighboring Town Boats or Dive Team
  - Kingston
  - Hanson
  - Bridgewater
  - Pembroke

- Plymouth County Dive Team
- Plymouth County Sheriff Communication Unit
- DFS Rehab Unit
- *In the event that there is an animal in trouble on the ice, the Animal Control Officer, ACO, shall be notified and required to respond.*

Department divers off duty shall respond directly to the scene and report to the Incident Commander.

### **25.3 COMMUNICATION**

Consideration shall be taken to not overwhelm any one frequency. The I/C shall utilize the County M/A channels if outside agencies are responding. As long as agencies that are involved are represented at the Command Post with their own perspective frequencies this shall not overwhelm the channel in which search, rescue or recovery operations are being conducted and allow for smoother command and control of the event.

### **25.4 ACCOUNTABILITY**

The I/C shall ensure a tight span of control for emergency responders. Tagging in and accountability boards shall be deployed and assistance if needed from other rescuers shall be a priority. Each agency shall be instructed to ensure accountability to reduce free lancing and the possibility of injury or death. In the event an emergency is noticed or declared the term “Mayday” shall be utilized as in fire ground operations.

### **25.5 OPERATIONS**

All members on the water or ice shall be in Survival suits, dive gear or Personnel Floatation Devices. **No Exceptions.**

Safety Officers shall be assigned as soon as practical. Everybody is to ensure their own safety and that of those around them.

Incident Commander Responsibility shall include but is not limited to the following:

- Identify the reporting party and/or witness and garner all information appropriate to affect rescue/recovery. Retain witness or caller at C/P.
- Determine Rescue or Recovery and develop incident action plan
- Establish a suitable Command Post to direct resources to suitable launch site or point of entry.

- Initiate a mark for future reference as to last known location of victim.
- Initiate Quick search with available resources if safe to do so.
- Determine search strategy, small area free search, tethered search, tow-bar search
- Secure scene perimeter with law enforcement land or water.
- Establish ALS Ambulance for rescuers or victim.
- Establish the following sectors to minimize I/C overload
  - Safety Officer, consider an overall SO and site specific S/O
  - Operations Officer, qualified individual with rank or experience that is not involved in the tactics of the event to oversee the operation. Reports to I/C.
  - Staging should be considered early when multiple resources are requested. Reports to I/C
  - *Dive Coordinator* coordinates dive operations tracking divers and rotating appropriately. DC works with I/C to establish overall strategy of rescue/recovery. Reports to I/C
  - Rehab Sector, Establish site near divers or rescuers in long term event to hydrate and nourish participants.
  - Logistics Sector, Establish and acquire necessary items to support event. Transportation of equipment to site from staging, fuel for boats, lighting if night time operations are conducted.
  - Any other position within the Plymouth County Incident Command Plan

Boat Operators shall be tasked with the operation of the boat only and **not** involved in the direction of the event when suitable resources are available. The safety of those in the water is paramount and operations must be conducted as such.

Safety lines shall be deployed when members are operating solo or when ice is involved unless the safety line itself will lead to an unsafe operation or act.

There should always be at least one member 75% dressed available to back up those in the operation, in a Survival suit or dive suit, the ratio of safety should be 2 to 1.

## **25.6 ICE OPERATIONS:**

The initial entry will be without the ice rescue sled - the objective is to get a rescuer to the victim as quickly as possible. Back-up rescuers will deploy the ice rescue sled or Hovercraft.

Hand Signals are as follows:

One arm raised straight up means STOP.  
One arm rotated overhead means PULL BACK.  
*One arm waving means RESCUER IN TROUBLE*  
Tap head for OK – You or the victim

## **25.7 UNDERWATER RESCUE TEAM**

**Purpose:** To establish guidelines for the safe operation of the Halifax Fire Department Underwater Rescue Team. All participants will conduct themselves in a manner that maximizes protection of the underwater rescue team from injury, illness or death.

**Command and Control:** Dive operations during training and activation's will follow the Incident Command System. The IC will designate a Dive Master, who will direct all technical aspects of the dive operation. The Dive Master is defined later. The Dive Master will delegate a Dive Safety Officer, who will assist the Dive Master Concerning all aspects of safety.

**Dive Coordinator:** The *Dive Coordinator* shall be in complete control of all diving operations. The *DC* shall plan, organize and manage all aspects of the operation. The *DC* will brief all divers and expect complete cooperation from all divers and tolerate no deviation from accepted diving procedures or standards. The *DC* will work closely with the IC and coordinate all resources needed through him. The *DC* will select a surface post, which will afford him the ability to supervise all divers and support persons. At the conclusion of the operation the *DC* will submit a log of all activity complete with times of entry, water temperature, visibility, conditions other pertinent information.

In the event the HFD URT responds to an incident which has an established Incident Command System in place. In the event the incident has an established qualified *Dive Coordinator*, the Team will follow his/her direction as the authority having jurisdiction.

**Dive Safety Officer:** The DSO shall be a qualified diver and have an expertise of understanding all aspects of the inherent danger of diving. The DSO shall have the authority to stop and correct unsafe acts.

### **Dive Operations:**

Upon arrival all members shall report to the I/C or designated staging area. It shall be the responsibility of the first in senior most diver to act

as the representative of the TEAM in the absence of the DC and incident information will be gathered to formulate a rescue/recovery plan.

**All solo diving shall be prohibited. During a rescue mode and an exact location and a team response is in effect. One diver may enter the water accompanied by a support person tethered and may only be done if a divers safety is not jeopardized. The diver is allowed to be submerged no longer than 10 minutes.**

No divers shall enter the water until a Dive Safety Officer and a minimum of one safety person has been equipped and available on site. The Dive Safety Officer shall collect and account for all PASS Tags. The DSO shall also verify all members diving as having the proper certificate for the diving encountered.

A ratio of one support person for every two divers shall be maintained. The support persons will maintain a point of entry and exit for the divers. The support persons will designate a support area to stage equipment and other items necessary to maintain a dive operation.

Rope signals shall follow the OATH standard.

Ok ..... 1 pull  
Advance ..... 2 pulls  
Take up ..... 3 pulls  
Help ..... 4 pulls

A safety zone of a minimum of 500 feet will be established for divers and free of unauthorized boats, swimmers or bystanders. There shall be a divers flag prominently displayed during all diving operations.

When multiple divers are diving in a group A Dive Team Leader shall be selected to coordinate others in his group. Multiple teams may be deployed as the situation warrants and designated by a number so long as adequate safety can be maintained.

Teams operating in the water shall have a safety line attached to one diver supported by a line tender. All others in the group must maintain line of sight with that person or a tether line.

Divers reserve the right to refuse to dive if in his/her judgment conditions are unfavorable or contradict standard performance operations.

Upon surfacing all divers shall communicate they are AOK by touching one hand to their head.

All divers shall have a means of positive buoyancy on all dives.

No diver shall dive below 60 feet. Dive tables and charts shall be utilized and adhered to at all times.

A pre-dive safety check shall be conducted on all members prior to entry.

**Underwater Rescue Team Qualifications:** Members of the Halifax Fire Department Underwater Dive Team shall have the following qualifications in order to dive for the HFD URT.

**Minimum Qualifications**

- Ability to physically work in water at depths and in darkness.
- Open Water Certification.
- Advanced Open Water Certification or Open Water II.
- Perform four dives a calendar year with a minimum of two with the Team.

All certifications will be obtained from N.A.U.I., P.A.D.I or any other certifying agency approved by the Fire Chief.

All HFD URT members agree to maintain the HFD equipment assigned to them in good serviceable condition. Any equipment determined by the DSO to be deficient shall be cause to be not utilized. Members also understand equipment is expendable and may be ditched in the event to facilitate a rescue or other unsafe condition. All members shall be constantly aware of the effects of diving in contaminated water on their equipment and themselves.

All physical problems shall be reported immediately to the *DC* upon the feeling of any signs and or symptoms for any injury or illness.