

MONTGOMERY COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 9

Caney Creek Volunteer Fire Department



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SWIFT WATER RESCUE INCIDENTS

1.00 PURPOSE

1.01 To assure the safety of all Fire Department personnel responding to a Water Rescue Incident.

2.00 OBJECTIVE

2.01 To provide a guideline for all members to follow in securing the scene and gathering information until the arrival of the Rescue Team.

3.00 DEFINITIONS

3.01 PFD: Personal Flotation Device.

3.02 Recovery Mode: Any incident that involves the removal of victim(s) who are considered biologically deceased or evidence indicating that the potential for a viable, savable victim(s) is extremely low. **This is not an emergency function!** All risks which could endanger personnel while operating in the recovery mode shall be reduced to a manageable level.

3.03 Rescue Mode: An incident that involves the extrication and care of patients for whom biological death has not yet occurred.

3.04 River Right/Left: The right/left sides of the river as you are looking downstream.

3.05 Safety Officer: Safety Officer not directly involved in the rescue/incident that is responsible for **overall** scene safety.

3.06 Rescue Extrication Officer (REO): A trained and qualified Rescue Team member in charge of all rescue operations within the Hot Zone.

3.07 Throw Rope Bag: A bag carried on various fire apparatus that contain a rope for rescue purposes. One rope end is wrapped around the hand of the rescuer and the bag obtaining the remainder of the rope is thrown to the victim. The rope will deploy due to the momentum of the bag, which will establish a lifeline to the victim. Note: Wetting the Throw Rope Bag will assist in deploying rope.

3.08 Water Rescue Incident: Any water related incident, usually in swift water, carrying a high life hazard potential requiring the dispatch and possible utilization of MCESD#9 Rescue Boats.

4.00 SCOPE

4.01 This guideline applies to all personnel assigned to Emergency Operations.

5.00 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.01 Fire Com: Will dispatch the appropriate apparatus to survey the situation and determine if a water related incident is in progress, or is imminent. The Officer in charge will determine the type of incident (i.e. Lake Rescue, Swift water Rescue or Water based on incoming information.

5.02 Incident Commander: May have to act as scene Safety Officer, Rescue Extrication Officer as well as Incident Commander until manpower allow these positions to be independently staffed.

6.00 GUIDELINES

6.01 First-Arriving Officer Scene Preparation: The first arriving company officer shall:

- A. Secure the immediate area and establish a Hot Zone at least 100 Feet from the edge of the water.
- B. Establish Command, and request a tactical channel.
- C. Attempt to establish voice communication with the victim(s) in order to clam and reassure them.
- D. Give a situation report to all responding companies.
- E. Request additional companies downstream (1/4 mile min.) and upstream (1/4 mile min.) if the victim(s) is in moving water.

Swift Water Rescue Incident

- F. Identify witnesses.
- G. **No MCESD#9 personnel or civilians shall be allowed inside the Hot Zone without PFD.** Police assistance should be requested, if necessary.
- A. Command must identify the problem and make a decision whether or not to operate in the rescue or recovery mode. If operating in the rescue mode, Command should consider the following potential hazards to rescuers and victims.
 - 1. Speed of flowing water.
 - 2. Temperature of the water.
 - 3. Hydraulics (dynamic movement of the water).
 - 4. Debris.
- B. If the victim can be seen, Command should determine if the victim is in immediate life threatening danger or is relatively safe and secure for the moment. If the victim is in an immediate life threatening danger, rescue must be made.

C. Rescue options will be considered and executed in order from low risk to high risk. "**Reach-Throw-Row-Go-Helo**" shall be the proper order of execution to affect the rescue.

1. If possible, **REACH** the victim with whatever means available. If the victim is too far out in the water to reach with something, **THROW** is the next option.
2. Rescuers should attempt to **THROW** the victim a throw rope bag, polypropylene line or some piece of positive flotation (i.e., PFD, ring buoy, seat cushion, etc.). Victims should be instructed to grab the rope but not tie it around themselves. The rescuer can then pendulum relay or haul the victim to the nearest bank. Downstream personnel should be in position during the actual rescue operation.
3. **ROW** — only qualified North Montgomery County Fire Department members shall operate watercraft.
4. **GO** — shall be the last consideration. PFD's are mandatory for this operation and shall be donned. A safety line shall be attached to the rescuer in addition to the PFD. The rescuer shall never be attached to a lifeline without the benefit of a quick release mechanism.
5. **HELO** — (Helicopter) operations with private entities or Coast Guard. These operations should be coordinated with Command.

D. Command shall consider the need for the following:

1. **Upstream Group:** This group consists of personnel whose responsibility would be to watch for and advise Command of any obstacles and/or hazards that may be floating downstream and may hinder the rescue operation. **PFD's shall be donned.**
2. **Downstream Group:** Personnel are responsible to prepare to rescue victims and rescuers that may be swept downstream. All personnel in this branch should have a throw rope bag in hand. There should be downstream personnel on both sides of the waterway. PFD's shall be donned.
3. **Rescue Extrication Group:** Responsible for gathering all equipment and personnel necessary to perform a rescue. The Rescue Extrication Officer will assign the rescue personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase.
4. **Safety Officer:** Individual(s) assigned the responsibility of identifying and correcting hazards.

6.03 Scene Management:

- A. IC: Shall coordinate with Rescue personnel and will be responsible for the overall management of the incident.
- B. Safety Officer: Shall be responsible for ensuring that the overall operation is carried out in the safest manner possible.
- C. Access Officer: Shall be responsible for recording the entry/egress of all personnel into and out of the Hot Zone.
- D. Underwater body recoveries are the responsibility of the County Dive Teams. Incident Commanders shall notify the County Dive Team whenever an underwater recovery situation exists.
- E. Rescue and Evacuation Boat personnel shall be in radio contact with other ESD#9 (CCVFD) personnel via portable radios. A separate radio frequency may be requested for this communication.
- F. Two MCESD#9 personnel must be assigned to MCESD#9 watercraft at all times**