# White Mountain Apache



**Fire & Rescue Department**

**Adopted 02/13/2012**

**Emergency Procedures**

**SOP 750.05 Swift Water Rescue**

1. **Purpose**
   1. The purpose of this procedure is to outline responsibilitiesfor first arriving units, swift water technicians and/or teams, command officers, and other fire department personnel operating at swift water rescue incidents.
2. **Scope**
   1. This policy applies to all operational personnel.
3. **Guidelines**
   1. Arrival
      1. First arriving company officer shall:
         1. assume Command,
         2. size up the situation, and
            1. Secure a witness to assist in gathering information to determine exactly what happened and the location of any victim(s). If no witnesses are present, Command may have to look for clues on the scene to determine what happened.
            2. Assess the immediate and potential hazards to the rescuers.
            3. Isolate immediate hazard area, secure the scene, and deny entry for all non-rescue personnel.
            4. Assess on-scene capabilities and determine the need for additional resources.
         3. determine operational mode of RESCUE or RECOVERY
      2. Reserved
   2. Pre-Rescue/Recovery Operations
      1. MAKE THE SCENE SAFE:
         1. Establishing a hazard zone perimeter.
            1. A minimum of 10 feet from the shore line shall be considered the start of the hot zone.
         2. Keep all non-essential rescue personnel out of the hot zone.
         3. Remove all non-essential civilian personnel to the cold zone, at least 100 feet from the warm zone.
         4. Ensure all people operating within the hot zone are wearing appropriate PPE.
      2. MAKE THE GENERAL AREA SAFE
         1. Identify hazards that are present which include, but are not limited to,:
            1. Volume of water
            2. Velocity of the water
            3. Debris in the water
            4. Hydraulics
            5. Depth of the water (rising/falling)
         2. Assign personnel upstream to identify any potential hazards that maybe affect rescue operations.
            1. “Upstream” shall be the radio designation.
         3. Assign personnel downstream with appropriate PPE and throw bags to capture rescuers and/or civilians that may wash down stream.
            1. “Downstream” shall be the radio designation.
         4. Assign a Safety Officer as soon as resources become available.
         5. Assign a Rescue Group and supervisor, who will:
            1. ensure that all personnel operating in the rescue group are accounted for and wearing appropriate PPE.
            2. develop a rescue plan and a back-up plan.
            3. ensure the plan and back-up plan, which include emergency procedures, are communicated to all personnel operating on the incident.
      3. Reserved
   3. Rescue/Recovery Operations
      1. Rescue operations should be conducted with as little risk to the rescuers as necessary to affect the rescue. Low-risk operations may not always be possible but should be considered first. The order of rescue from low-risk to high-risk are:
         1. TALK – if water is calm or slow moving, try to talk the victim into self-rescue if possible.
         2. REACH – extend an arm, pike pole, rescue hook, or any other such object to reach the victim and pull from the water.
         3. THROW – attempt to throw the victim(s) a throw-bag rescue line or some other type of approved safety flotation device and “pendulum-belay” or “haul” the victim(s) to the bank.
         4. ROW - If it is determined that a boat-based operation shall be utilized, Rescue Group shall assign a company on the opposite bank to assist in establishing an anchor for an approved rope system.
         5. GO - If it is not possible to row to the victim, Rescue Group should consider putting a rescuer or rescuers in the water to reach the victim. This is a very high risk operation and shall be conducted exclusively by trained Swift water Technician personnel. Prior to entering the water, rescue personnel shall be briefed on the plan, the back-up plan and emergency procedures. Rescue personnel shall never be attached to a life line without the benefit of a quick-release mechanism approved for water rescue. Rescue personnel shall never do a “breath-hold” surface dive in an attempt to locate a victim beneath the surface of the water.
      2. Victim Assessment
         1. When the rescuers reach the victim, a primary survey shall be completed.
         2. If the victim is conscious, rescuers should determine if the victim can assist in the rescue.
            1. Provide the victim(s) with their own flotation device and helmet.
         3. If the victim is unconscious, the rescue must be completed as quickly as possible.
            1. Provide the victim with their own flotation device as a minimum.
         4. Once the victim is on shore:
            1. initiate C-spine precautions as soon as possible.
            2. conduct a secondary survey and correct any life threatening conditions.
            3. provide for ALS level treatment and transportation to a hospital as indicated.
   4. Termination
      1. Ensure personnel accountability.
      2. Consider decontamination of victim(s) and rescuer(s).
      3. Recover all tools and equipment used in the rescue/recovery. In cases of a fatality, consider leaving everything in place until the investigative process has been completed.
      4. Consider an After Action Review.
      5. Return to service after returning all equipment to apparatus.
   5. Reserved
4. **Responsibilities**
   1. Engine companies shall pre-plan potential swift water locations within their jurisdiction.
   2. All swift water gear shall be kept in good working conditioned and periodically inventoried and inspected.
   3. Swift water gear may be assigned to trained members, however if the number of trained members outnumber quantity, swift water gear shall be stored in their water bags at the station, and labeled with the description, size and quantities of the items. As a minimum, each bag shall have the following:
      1. Water helmet
      2. Personal flotation device
      3. Dry suit
      4. Wet suit
      5. River boots
      6. Water gloves
      7. Whistle
      8. Throw bag
   4. Swift water technicians shall attend annual refresher training.
5. **Historical Note**
   1. Policy was initially created on 10/25/2011 by a Captain and Firefighter and amended. SOP was then sent out for review for two (2) months with no recommendations or further amendments.
   2. Policy was approved on February 13, 2012 at the regular scheduled Chief’s meeting without any amendments or recommendations.