

---

---

# Ocean City Fire Department Standard Operating Guidelines

---

---

## Special Operations

Subject:       Surface Water Rescue  
Revised:       6-15-2011  
Effective:      6-21-11  
Approved:      6-21-11  
Section:       500.00

### 500.01 Scope

This guideline applies to all members of the Ocean City Fire Department and defines the extent to which they will participate in water rescues.

### 500.02 Purpose

The purpose of this SOG is to provide a guideline for conducting surface water rescue operations in either the ocean or the bays.

### 500.03 Definitions

- A. Non-entry personnel – those individuals who have either elected not to complete or who have failed to complete the necessary testing and training requirements for entry personnel. These individuals are not permitted to enter water that is greater than waist deep and are restricted to land-based operations and support.
- B. Entry personnel – those individuals who have completed the necessary testing and training requirements for entry personnel. These individuals have been designated as “rescue swimmers” and under certain conditions may be required to enter the water to affect the rescue of a victim.
- C. Victim – in this context, an individual who requires rescue from an aquatic environment.

### 500.04 Qualifications and Training

- A. Non-entry Personnel – these individuals will receive basic training on the following topics:
  - 1. Command and Planning
  - 2. Records and Reporting
  - 3. Communications
  - 4. Environmental Conditions related to the Aquatic Environment
  - 5. Land-based Operations and Support
- B. Entry Personnel – these members will receive the same basic training as non-entry personnel. Additionally, these members will be required to:
  - 1. Complete an initial and annual swimmer evaluation that consists of the following:
    - a) 500 yard free swim
    - b) 15 minute tread
    - c) 100 yard inert rescue tow

- d) Free dive
- 2. Complete training on the following topics:
  - a) Basic rescue techniques and procedures
  - b) Advanced rescue techniques and procedures

## 500.05 Procedure

### A. Response

- 1. Upon dispatch the on-duty shift commander or duty chief shall ensure that there is a minimum of two entry personnel/rescue swimmers responding to any reported surface water rescue if possible; this may include any Ocean City Beach Patrol (OCBP) personnel. Rescue Swimmers from another Box Area needed at the scene will be dispatched at the discretion of the OIC for the shift.

### B. On Scene Operations

- 1. On arrival the first rescue swimmer on scene will assess the situation and make a risk vs. benefits determination on whether or not swimmers will need to enter the water in order to affect a rescue.
- 2. If it is necessary for personnel to enter the water, the following should occur:
  - a) The initial swimmer into the water shall communicate his plan to the Incident Commander (IC) or person in charge on land. This plan should take into consideration, but not be limited to the following:
    - i) The number, location and condition of the victim(s).
    - ii) Weather conditions – lightning, cold, ...
    - iii) Hazards in and around the location of the incident such as: currents, surf conditions (if applicable), debris, boat traffic,...
    - iv) Time of day.
  - b) The initial swimmer, at a minimum, shall be equipped with a rescue can and swim fins.
  - c) The second swimmer into the water shall be deployed with the land line, rescue can and swim fins.
  - d) If there are already Rescue Swimmers in the water, the Water Rescue Vehicle (789) should make access to the beach. The Headquarters Career Crew may split (2 and 1) or drop to a 2 person crew to get the Water Rescue Vehicle to the scene if there is not anyone else available to respond with the vehicle.
  - e) During extreme storm conditions if the Coast Guard is not operating in the ocean, our Rescue Swimmers are not allowed to enter the water.
- 3. The IC should also consider the request of additional resources in order to complete the objectives. Those resources may include:
  - a) Ocean City Beach Patrol
  - b) U.S. Coast Guard
  - c) Maryland State Police Aviation Division
  - d) Maryland Natural Resources Police
- 4. The IC should consider posting an observer/spotter in an elevated position in order to maintain broader view of the incident and to assist in locating victims and/or personnel who have entered the water.

5. Non-entry personnel within ten (10) feet of the water's edge are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved Type III/V personal flotation device (PFD).

C. Demobilization

1. Ensure accountability of all personnel.
2. Consider an incident debriefing.
3. Medical evaluation of all personnel who entered the water, to include:
  - a) Vital signs
  - b) Body temperature
  - c) Mental status

## 500.06 Gear

A. Rescue Gear and Swim Suits

1. When working on shift or on payroll, all Rescue Swimmers are required to have their gear bag and equipment with them.
2. The gear and gear bag needs to be with the Rescue swimmer on the unit he/she is assigned to for their shift.
3. Gear is to be used for work purposes only, and not for recreation.