

## **FLOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE GUIDELINES**

THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN A FLOOD EMERGENCY IS YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY AND YOUR TEAM'S SAFETY. The hot zone is within 10 feet of any waterway. Always provide adequate backup for all water related engagements.

IMMEDIATELY ASSESS YOUR AREAS OF HIGH RISK. Preplanning is critical. Prepare equipment and plan for evacuations.

RECOGNIZE THE RISKS AND DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH WATER EMERGENCIES and take actions to ensure you and your team's safety. Prepare for a self-emergency. If swept away, float on your back with feet downstream and at the surface. Backstroke and angle yourself toward shore.

DO NOT WEAR TURNOUT GEAR when responding to a water-related emergency.

WEAR PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) WHICH MUST INCLUDE WEARING A LIFE JACKET (PFD) AND A WATER RESCUE HELMET. Other important PPE includes a dry suit for protection from water contaminants. Thermal protection worn beneath the dry suit may also be needed.

APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR IS NEEDED FOR WATER RESCUE. Wear wading shoes or boots, NOT FIRE BOOTS! Good hand protection is neoprene gloves.

BE PREPARED TO DECONTAMINATE PERSONNEL after they come out of the water. They may be exposed to a wide variety of chemicals and pollutants. Rescue team members should maintain vaccinations for preventable diseases such as hepatitis and tetanus. Post medical exams are a good idea.

During boat operations in urban areas be aware that HAZARDS EXIST ABOVE (low-hanging electrical lines) AND BELOW THE BOAT (mailboxes, fences, gas and parking meters, etc). Assure utilities are secured in the area of engagement prior to in-water rescue activities.

USE A POLE OR STAFF TO PROBE AHEAD when wading in NON-MOVING floodwaters to make sure there are no open manholes or other traps.

MOVING WATER IS INCREDIBLY POWERFUL. Never underestimate its power; 18-24 inches will lift and move a vehicle. Underwater currents can be very deceiving, especially with debris in the water or poor visibility.

DO NOT DRIVE OR ALLOW ANYONE TO DRIVE ACROSS A FLOODED ROADWAY. During floods, the #1 reason for fatalities is driving across a flooded roadway.

PREPARE FOR NIGHT OPERATIONS. Floods do not care about what time of day it is. Use reflective tape on helmets. Issue light sticks and portable lights with extra batteries to all personnel.

RADIO CONTACT MUST BE MAINTAINED WITH ALL PERSONNEL. Maintain PAR levels.

ALWAYS PLACE RESCUED VICTIMS IN PROPER PPE, i.e. a life jacket prior to moving. Consider sheltering in place and establishment of safe havens only after consulting the forecast and rescue capabilities.

Mark buildings and vehicles that have been searched for victims with a marking system that indicates they were already searched. This eliminates the potential for a second team wasting valuable time during a disaster response.

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