



SHROPSHIRE

Fire and Rescue Service

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**Brigade Order
Operations
7**

Part 6

**Water safety
policy**

Part 6 – Water safety policy

Purpose

The purpose of this Order is to formalise the Brigade Policy on water safety. It outlines the appropriate mobilisation of appliances and the standards of training and experience required to operate within hazardous areas associated with rescues in, on, or near to water.

Strategic aims and objectives

This Order supports the following Strategic Aims:

Aim 1: Reduce the risk to life and material loss from fire and other emergencies in the community

Aim 2: Protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies

Aim 3: Secure the highest level of safety and welfare for staff by providing effective leadership and management, training, equipment and systems of work.

Aim 4: Provide a service that demonstrates quality and best value in service provision.

Roles, responsibilities and review

The **Head of Operational Response** is responsible for ensuring this Order is implemented across the Brigade.

The Head of District Performance will be responsible for the day to day operation of the Order.

The **Head of Operational Response** will review this Order biennially in May and as and when organisational changes take place.

Introduction

The Fire and Rescue Service is being called upon to attend an increasing number of incidents involving water rescue. Indeed, in Shropshire, the major rivers, extensive lakes, ponds and canal networks make rescue from water our third most commonly attended life risk incidents, following fires and road traffic collisions. This Brigade Order sets out the SFRS policy for ensuring the safety of all personnel at incidents in or near water.

Detailed operational procedures will be found elsewhere, in particular, Fire Service Manual Volume 2, Operations, "Working near, on or in water".

Risk areas

Records of previously attended incidents show that the areas of the county where rescues from water are most likely to occur are Shrewsbury, Ironbridge, Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Ellesmere and Ludlow. The vast majority occur in the River Severn around Shrewsbury, and for this reason, the main water rescue capability will be based at Shrewsbury.

Training

There should be a minimum of eight SRT qualified personnel on each wholetime watch at Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury Retained Duty System (RDS) will also have six personnel trained to this standard as they often provide support to the boat crew.

There are four levels of training that will be provided dependant upon the role of individuals at incidents involving water.

- All operational personnel will receive "water awareness" as part of their basic training, which will be refreshed and updated as required by on station training and drill. This level of training is designed to provide staff with sufficient knowledge about the dangers of water to make themselves safer at incidents.
- Initial operational response training. This will give staff the basic skills to stabilise the situation and to attempt rescue by either "talk, reach or throw" methods. It is particularly important that stations with a known water risk carry out regular continuation training in these methods as they may be the first crews to attend incidents. Associate trainers are available to assist in water safety training at this level at stations.
- Swift water Rescue Technician Level 1 (SRT 1). This level of training is designed to allow qualified persons to enter flowing water to carry out rescues.

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- Swift Water Rescue Technician Level 2, (Boat handler). This is the level of training required for personnel to be able to handle the rescue boat in the safest possible manner in a variety of hazardous conditions.

Maintaining competence of SRT qualified personnel is a costly and time consuming issue. Consequently, at the present time, only those personnel based at Shrewsbury will be expected to achieve and maintain competence to SRT Level 1 and 2.

Equipment

All equipment likely to be required for incidents in or near water will be carried on the Water Rescue unit based at Shrewsbury. This will include the rescue boat and Personal Protective Equipment required by Swift Water Rescue Technicians. For this reason, personnel based elsewhere will not require training to SRT standard at this time.

All pumping appliances will carry two lifejackets / buoyancy aids as personnel are likely to be working adjacent to open water.

Mobilisation

On receipt of any call to persons experiencing difficulty in or near water Fire Control will mobilise the following resources:

- Water Rescue unit with boat and a minimum of 4 crew members.
- a supporting appliance from Shrewsbury (members of which may make up the boat crew of 4)
- the nearest rescue pump
- Level 2 Incident Commander.

On arrival of the first appliance the Officer in Command (OIC) will attempt to stabilise the situation and assess if anything can be done within the level of training received by the crew. On no account must untrained staff carry out rescues that exceed their level of competence.

On arrival the Level 2 Incident Commander will make a further assessment of the incident and request the attendance of additional resources as required.

On receipt of a call where there is no risk to human life Fire Control will mobilise an officer (which may be the Level 2 Incident Commander) to liaise with the caller, and to make an assessment of the incident. The officer will then request further appliances as required.

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If in any doubt, Fire Control will mobilise the full attendance at the time of call.

Safety

Safety of crews is paramount and the Incident Commander, in consultation with an experienced Swift Water Rescue Technician, where available, will carry out a thorough Dynamic Risk Assessment of the incident and ensure that adequate control measures are in place prior to committing crews.

Under no circumstances will personnel enter water that is defined as flowing and/or more than knee deep, unless they are trained to Swift Water Rescue Technician level and are wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment.

Personnel may enter water, whether flowing or not, if it is less than knee deep, provided they have conducted an appropriate risk assessment.

Operational procedures

All incidents which require personnel to work in or near water will require good command and control, as well as highly committed and trained personnel. Level 2 Incident Commanders will always be guided by appropriately qualified and experienced Swift Water Rescue Technicians. They will also be guided by Fire Service Manual Volume 2, Operations, "Working near, on or in water", and current Water Safety Guidance (Operational Briefing Note 3/03).

When attending incidents of this nature considerable pressure will be applied by members of the public demanding that crews take immediate action. For this reason SRT qualified personnel will normally dress in full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), prior to arrival at the scene. Crews attending prior to the arrival of SRTs must adhere to the instructions given in the above documents with particular reference to the hierarchy of rescue options.

Pre-planning

A major issue for all water based activity is pre-planning, particularly for access to the waterside and launching of the water rescue boat. Each station should prepare a detailed plan of water risks on their station ground and in consultation with Boat Handlers, must consider where access can be made to water throughout the seasons. This information will be entered onto the Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) for reference.

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