

BODEGA BAY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES	Article: I	SOG 2-3.2
	Reference: NFPA/State Fire Training/IADRS/USLA Manual	
	Subject: OPEN WATER SWIMMER/ SURF RESCUE SWIMMER	

The Fire District has established the following qualifications and standards for staff to participate in and assist with aquatic incidents. The State Fire Marshall has recently developed a curriculum and standard for fire service marine response. Fire District swimmers will respond and attempt to mitigate incidents at county and state beaches. Fire District swimmers will either be a first response resource or an additional resource to support and backup State Parks Lifeguards at the discretion of the incident commander.

Participation in the rescue swimmer program is voluntary and will be supported by the Fire District.

CLASSIFICATIONS:

- **Open Water Swimmer**
 - Limited to shore based and boat based deployments within the bays or tidewaters of the following: Bodega Harbor, Salmon Creek, Tomales Bay or Jenner Estuary.
 - May participate in rescues outside these areas in the presence and at the discretion of a qualified surf rescue swimmer or the Marine Unit Coordinator
- **Surf Rescue Swimmer**
 - May affect rescues on all open ocean beaches and coastal areas in any conditions.
 - May deploy into or through the surf zone from shore, vessel or helicopter anywhere within the ambulance district and surrounding areas as requested.

TRAINING STANDARDS:

- **Reference standards**
 - NFPA 1670
 - NFPA 1006 Chapter 11, sections 11.2, Chapter 15, sections 15.2.
 - USLA Manual
 - CSFM Open Water Swimmer
- **Minimum Training Requirement for Open Water Swimmer**
 - Surf Rescue Operations Course meeting NFPA 1670 and 1006 Standards
 - Successful completion of the BBFPD open water taskbook
 - Minimum 20 documented hours of in water training. Additional hours as needed or required.
 - Annual qualification swim of 500 meters in less than 10 minutes
 - CPR & Title 22 First Aid
- **Minimum Training Requirements for Surf Rescue Swimmer (in addition to the above requirements)**
 - Successful completion of the BBFPD surf rescue task book
 - Minimum 20 documented hours of in water training in the surf environment. Additional hours as needed or required
 - Annual qualification swim of 1000 meters in less than 20 minutes

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- **Equivalent Training**

- At the discretion of the program leader and Fire Chief
- USLA Ocean Lifeguard Certification

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) Issued by the District upon completion of the open water course, biennially thereafter:

- Wetsuit
 - Minimum of a 4/3mm with a hood
 - Booties
- Fins
- Fin Belt
- Can buoy or rescue tube
- Helmet
- Dive light and strobe light
- Dive mask and snorkel
- Mesh duffel bag

RISK ASSESSMENT:

The emphasis on risk management helps you determine if your actions meet the SOG in the determination of a rescue being an "offensive" or "defensive" operation. Reading and understanding surf, contact rescues using rescue buoy devices and boards, dealing with combatant victims, performing self-rescues, and rescues of multiple victims both conscious and unconscious.

An established risk assessment model shall be used for both the swimmer and the vessels operations to determine the whether the risk to the rescuer(s) is too great given incident circumstances or the likelihood of a recovery versus a rescue.

RESPONSE/ COMMUNICATIONS:

- Approved Fire District swimmers may respond in personal vehicles to the scene provided they have communications and proper PPE and equipment.
- Members shall communicate their response over the assigned Control channel with their assigned identifier. E.g. "BDB 23 responding as a swimmer" and communicate their arrival at scene.
- While enroute or arrival at scene, coordination with other units and/or BDB resources should take place on the assigned tactical channel, typically Marine 22A
- Swimmers that have responded in a personal vehicle should clear from the scene only once they have made contact with the I.C. and communicated with the Control channel of their status as to maintain accountability.

DEPLOYMENT:

- Open water/surf rescue swimmer shall confirm an action plan with IC or affiliated agency rep and

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- adhere to the chain of command and Simmer RIC (1in/1out).
- Deployment shall only be performed once a risk assessment has been completed and it has been determined by the swimmer and the Incident Commander that the situation warrants the deployment.
- A determination of a rescue vs recovery event type will be made. Initial responding rescue swimmers will not enter the water if the location of the victim is not reasonably known.
- The rescue swimmer may decline any rescue mission he/she feels is unsafe for any reason.
- **From a boat or other vessel**
 - Any qualified swimmer may be deployed within their designated area from a vessel to effect a rescue. A GAR assessment should include the event complexity and overall risk evaluation for the vessel being used and the environment the swimmer is going to enter.
 - The deployment vessel or other vessel shall be capable and available for immediate extraction of swimmer upon rescue of victim or in an emergency situation.
 - Proper PPE and victim rescue devices shall be used to minimize risk to swimmer
 - Standard hand signals will be used to communicate between the vessel and swimmer
- **From the shore**
 - Any qualified swimmer may affect a rescue or perform a search upon entering the water from the shore.
 - Shore based swimmers will not enter the water without a spotter maintaining accountability for the swimmer, unless under circumstances where not entering the water may cause more undue harm to the victim.
 - Proper PPE and victim rescue devices shall be used to minimize risk to swimmer
 - Standard USLA hand signals will be used to communicate between the spotter and swimmer
 - A 1 in and 1 out rule, which consists of 1 swimmer out of the water on stand-by for every 1 swimmer in the water should be utilized as staffing allows for.

COMMAND

- OIC should establish a unified command or utilize a member from an agency such as State Parks or USCG to assist with tactical decision making in the marine environment.
- Whenever possible the incident command post should be located in an elevated position that provides a clear view of the incident. This ensures accountability of all rescuers and victims.
- The Coast Incident Responders Plan shall be utilized and followed.
- Multiple ICS positions such as, safety, beach division, rescue group, may be needed and should be utilized to maximize effectiveness and accountability of the multiple groups that may be working on an ocean related incident.

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