



ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedures - 6.04 Ice Rescue



ICE RESCUE

Effective: August 15, 2025
Scheduled Review: August 15, 2028
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

I. PURPOSE

To establish a standard approach for conducting ice rescue operations. The objective is to carry out a successful rescue operation, which poses appropriate risk to the personnel involved given the likelihood of successful rescue.

II. DEFINITIONS

Hot zone - Is defined as the area within fifteen (15) feet of the ice / water's edge. All personnel within the "hot zone" shall wear personal flotation devices (PFD) and have such appropriately fastened / donned.

Technician Level - All firefighters are trained to a minimum technical level in accordance with NFPA 1006: Standard for Technical Rescue Personnel Professional Qualifications, 2021 Edition - Chapter 20 Ice Rescue. This level allows rescuers to perform entry rescue in the ice environment.

III. RESPONSE

A still alarm will respond for any reported person or animal ice / water rescue incident in open water, e.g., lake, pond, or river. Units will respond emergency traffic. The reason that animals receive an emergency response is that civilians are likely to attempt rescue in the absence of trained responders. Thus, an animal will likely devolve into a person and animal rescue.

IV. WATERCRAFT OPERATIONS

When there is ice on the Huron River, the rescue boat will not be deployed, the hull nor boat is intended for ice operations

V. PERSONNEL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Personnel Floatation Devices (PFD) - shall be worn by anyone within 15' of the ice.

Dry Suits with PFD – dry suits with PFD may be used instead of the Mustang ice rescue suit for anyone going onto the ice.

Mustang Ice Rescue Suit – shall be worn by anyone on the ice.

VI. INITIAL ACTIONS

1. Communicate visible patient(s) location(s) to responding units and maintain visual contact until the victim(s) is rescued.
2. Establish a unified incident command system incorporating the various agencies and departments, while performing/staffing appropriate ICS functions.
3. For non-visible victim(s), attempt to prevent witnesses from leaving the scene, keep them separated, and interview them for victim location information.



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4. Begin triangulation of non-visible victim's last-seen location.
5. Utilize on scene resources, such as aeriels, bridges, buildings, etc., to perform a visual survey of the search area.

VII. ICE RESCUE ACTIONS

The rescuer(s) shall be secured to the water rescue rope with a locking carabineer attached to the ice rescue suit on one end and the other end attached to a secure anchor point with a non-locking carabineer. A Stubai carabiner shall be attached to the water rescue rope, six (6) feet from the rescuer's chest. This equipment provides buoyancy, exposure protection and reduces the chance of injury to the rescuers. The ice rescue suit harness worn by the rescuer provides the rescuer with a lifeline as well as providing a proper method for the line tenders to pull the rescuer and victim to safety with the water rescue rope.

Line tenders shall be equipped with warm clothing, gloves, boots, and hats. Each line tender shall wear a PFD and a pair of ice crampons. This will provide the line tender with buoyancy and stable footing on the ice.

Self-rescue - The first unit on the scene shall attempt to talk the victim into self-rescue. This method works well when the victim is close to shore, responsive and is not showing any signs of hypothermia.

Reach - If the victim is in early stages of hypothermia but is able to understand instructions and hold on, the following rescue methods may be used to retrieve the victim. This can be accomplished by: rescue pole, pike pole, or water rescue throw line (75 feet).

Go - If self-rescue or reach options are not feasible, then a rescue team shall have to go retrieve the victim using the following procedures:

1. When the rescuer places a hand on top of their head, that is the "okay" signal and the pull team shall start pulling. If during the pull the rescuer again places a hand on top of their head, the pull team shall cease immediately until the rescuer again signals okay by placing a hand on top of their head.
2. A second rescuer shall be dressed in the proper equipment and ready to respond in the event the primary rescuer has trouble.
3. If a victim goes beneath the ice cap, the rescuer shall not enter the hole where the victim was last seen.
4. The rescuer shall approach the holes and do a visual check for the victim.
5. If the victim is seen, a rescue attempt shall be made.
6. If the rescuer is unable to locate the victim, the rescuer shall exit the area.
7. An area of "safe ice" in the immediate area must be located so the WCSO divers can work in close proximity to the last known location of the victim.

WCSO can initiate dive operations at their discretion if the risk/benefit analysis indicates that there is a probability of rescuing a viable patient and there is a reliable last-seen location. Both the fire and police supervisor/commander should physically co-locate, if possible, and remain together until the incident transitions to a recovery.



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Recovery - Once unified incident command determines the incident has transitioned from a rescue to a recovery, the established AAFD unified incident command system should transition to the respective lead law enforcement agency of scene.

VIII. HOIST RESCUE – UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

In the event where shore rescue has failed, a request shall be made to the US Coast Guard. The US Coast Guard Air Station Detroit is located on the Selfridge Air National Guard base. Air Station Detroit is dispatched from the Ninth District Command Center 1-800-321-4400.

The USCG will not provide a standing agreement to do a hoist rescue. However, if the incident commander or other senior officer calls with a person trapped and no other options, there is a good chance they will come.

Radio communication can be made with the air crew via the following MPSCS talkgroups. These are in the Statewide E zone on all radios.

Air LZ 1

Air LZ 2

USCG Aviation 1

USCG Aviation 2