

Polson City/Rural FIRE DEPARTMENT Operating Guidelines

Issued By: Chief Thomas J. Maloney

Created on June 13, 2006

Revised by Chief John Ed Fairchild November 28, 2008

329.00 Rehabilitation for Firefighters

Page 01 of 03

Purpose:

To ensure that the physical and mental condition of members operating at the scene of an emergency or a training exercise does not deteriorate to a point that affects the safety of each member or that jeopardizes the safety and integrity of the operation.

Scope:

This procedure shall apply to all emergency operations and training exercises where strenuous physical activity or exposure to heat or cold exists. Any deviations from this policy are the incident commander's responsibility.

Responsibilities:

Incident Commander:

The Incident Commander shall consider the circumstances of each incident and make adequate provisions early in the incident for the rest and rehabilitation for all members operating at the scene. These provisions may include: medical evaluation, treatment and monitoring; food and fluid replenishment; mental rest; and relief from extreme climatic conditions and the other environmental parameters of the incident. The rehabilitation may include the provision of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) at the Basic Life Support (BLS) level or higher.

Group Leaders/Section Officers:

All Officers shall maintain an awareness of the condition of each member operating within their span of control and ensure that adequate steps are taken to provide for each member's safety and health. The command structure shall be utilized to request relief and the reassignment of fatigued crews.

Personnel:

During periods of hot weather, members will be encouraged to drink water and activity beverages throughout the day. During any emergency incident or training evolution, all members shall advise their sector officers when they believe that their level of fatigue or exposure to heat or cold is approaching a level that could affect themselves, their crew, or the operation in which they are involved. Members shall also remain aware of the health and

safety of other members of their crew. Any personnel who disregard rehab guidelines may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Operation of Rehabilitation Sector:

Responsibility

The Incident Commander or his designee will establish a Rehabilitation Sector when conditions indicate that rest and rehabilitation is needed for personnel operating at an incident scene or training evolution. A member will be placed in charge of the sector and shall be known as the Rehab Officer. The Rehab Officer will typically report to Command.

Location:

The location for the Rehabilitation Area will normally be designated by the Incident Commander. If a specific location has not been designated, the Rehab Officer shall select an appropriate location based on the site characteristics and designations below.

Site Characteristics

- It should be in a location that will provide physical rest by allowing the body to recuperate from the demands and hazards of the activities.

- It should be far enough away from the scene that members may safely remove their turnout gear and SCBA and be afforded mental rest from the stress and pressure of the emergency operation or training evolution.

- It should provide suitable protection from the prevailing environmental conditions. During hot weather it should be in a cooler, shaded area. During cold weather, it should be in a warm, dry area.

- It must enable members to be free of exhaust fumes from apparatus, vehicles, or equipment (including those involved in the Rehabilitation Group Operations).

- It should be large enough to accommodate multiple crews, based on the size of the incident.

- It should be easily accessible by EMS units

- It should allow prompt reentry back into the emergency operation upon complete recuperation.

- Consideration should be given to multiple rehab sectors for use in large situations.

Site Designations:

- A nearby garage, building lobby, or other structure.
- A bus.
- Fire apparatus, ambulance, or other emergency vehicles at the scene or called to the scene.
- An open area in which a rehab Area can be created using tarps, fans, etc.

Resources

The Rehab Officer shall secure all necessary resources required to adequately staff and supply the Rehabilitation Area. The supplies should include the items listed below depending on the situation:

- Fluids - water, activity beverage, oral electrolyte solutions and ice.
- Food - soup, broth, or stew in hot/cold cups, other.
- Medical - blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, oxygen administration devices, cardiac monitors, intravenous solutions and thermometers
- Other - awnings, fans, tarps, electric smoke ejectors, heaters, extra equipment, floodlights, towels, traffic cones and fire tape (to identify the entrance and exit of the Rehabilitation Area.

Hydration:

A critical factor in the prevention of heat injury is the maintenance of water. Water must be replaced prior to and during emergency incidents. During heat stress, the member should consume at least one quart of water per hour. Rehydration is important even during cold weather operations where, despite the outside temperature, heat stress may occur during firefighting or other strenuous activity when protective equipment is worn. Alcohol and caffeine beverages should be avoided before and during heat stress because both interfere with the body's water conservation mechanisms.

Rest:

The "two air bottle rule," or 45 minutes of work time, is recommended as an acceptable level prior to mandatory rehabilitation. Members shall rehydrate (at least eight ounces) while SCBA cylinders are being changed. Firefighters having worked for two full 30-minute rated bottles, or 45 minutes, shall report to rehab for evaluation. In all cases, the objective evaluation of a member's fatigue level shall be the criteria for rehab time. Rest shall not be less than ten minutes and may exceed an hour as determined by the Rehab Officer. Fresh crews, or crews released from the Rehabilitation Sector shall be available in the Staging Area to ensure that fatigued members are not required to return to duty before they are rested, evaluated, and released by the Rehab Officer.

Personnel Resources

Command should consider Level II staging of additional personnel as backup/replacement resources. This shall primarily be considered during three alarm fires or greater.

Rescue Situations:

Rehab provisions during situations that have the possibilities of bloodborne pathogens require extreme care in the preparation and distribution of hydration/food supplies. A designated rehab support individual(s) must draw and distribute these supplies. Personnel with direct involvement of patient care, or exposure to victim bodily fluids, shall only be the recipient of rehab supplies. Decontamination of contaminated personnel must occur prior to accessing rehab supplies.