

# El Dorado County Fire Protection District

## Standard Operating Guideline

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**Article: 3 Emergency Operations**

Adopted: 03/01/17

**Section: 22 Rescue Swimmer**

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Revised: 06-18-2020

### I. Purpose

To establish a qualifications standard for District approved Rescue Swimmers who can function at the Water Rescue Technician level. These qualifications assure personnel are strong swimmers and can demonstrate competency in the water environment, both for their safety and the safety of the crew working alongside them.

### II. Standard

A. Minimum PPE for the standards performed in river or moving water environment shall include:

1. PFD.
2. Thermal protection (as needed).
3. Helmet appropriate for water rescue.
4. Cutting device.
5. Whistle.

B. All Water Rescue Operations shall follow standard state guidelines.

### III. Definitions

**Hazard Zone** – Area where personnel may perform tasks that expose them to risk, within 10' of shoreline.

**Rescue Swimmer** – District approved water rescue technician.

**Swift Water** – Water moving at a rate greater than one knot (1.15 mph or almost 2 ft./sec.). Class I: moving water with small waves; Class II: easy rapids with up to 3-ft. waves, with wide, clear channels; Class III: rapids with high, irregular waves, capable of swamping an open canoe; may require complex maneuvering and scouting from shore; Class IV: long, difficult rapids with constricted passages, scouting is necessary from shore, and not possible for open canoe; Class V: Extremely difficult, long, violent rapids with difficult rescue conditions, and unsuitable for open canoe.

### IV. Procedure

- A. Prior to testing, the employee must have successfully passed a 24 hour swift water rescue course that covered topics such as: duties of the rescue swimmer, environmental risk, components of rescue swimming, hand signals, approaching a victim, tethered rescues from shore, and familiarization with rafts/ paddle boards.
- B. A district approved Rescue Swimmer will successfully complete the following watermanship criteria every 2 years.
  1. Static water swim test will consist of:
    - a. 300 yard forward stroke swim (swimsuit only).
    - b. 15 minutes of treading water, last minute with hands above water.

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- c. 400 yard assisted swim (swimsuit, snorkel & fins).
  - d. 50 yard victim rescue tow (swimsuit, PFD, fins).
  - e. Free dive 3 times, to a depth of 9 feet and retrieve an object.
2. Pass a written test covering topics such as:
    - a. Hazards.
    - b. Hydrology.
    - c. River geography.
    - d. PPE.
    - e. Search Techniques/Strategies.
    - f. Communication: hand; whistle.
3. Skills Test
    - a. Rescue Swimmers shall show proficiency in performing skills that include:
      - a. Tying knots
      - b. Self rescue skills
      - c. Victim rescue skills
      - d. Technical rope systems
      - e. Perform a victim rescue from swift water (scenario).
        - i. Swimmers involved in actual incidents, where these skills were utilized; can be used as recertification (OJT).

(Criteria/test will be evaluated by the Districts Swift Water Rescue Swimmer coordinator)
4. A minimum of 10 hours of Annual Training will be assigned throughout the year.