

**Procedure  
4.19**

**EFFECTIVE  
DATE  
5-21-99**

**Eugene  
Police Department**



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## **Water Rescue**

### **4.19.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

Fire Operations is the primary responder for situations where there is a possibility of a water rescue. (For the first hour, while there is a possibility of saving the person, this is a rescue. After one hour, this is considered to be a body recovery.) While the Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) has statutory responsibility for inland waterways, Eugene Fire responds to incidents within its response area, and has a quicker response time. For LCSO Water Search and Rescue information, refer *Procedure 11.14 – Search and Rescue*.

#### **PART I - Responsibilities and Procedures for All Personnel**

- a. Responding officer
- b. Water rescue team
- c. Incident management

### **4.19.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES FOR ALL PERSONNEL**

#### **a. Responding Officer**

1. Notify dispatch, and request Fire. (Dispatch will notify LCSO of the incident.)
2. If Fire is already on scene, make contact at the command post to determine what assistance they need.
3. Contact any witness(es), to pinpoint the location the victim was last seen, and to determine the amount of time which has elapsed. Request that they remain at the scene until contacted by Fire personnel.
4. Perform an immediate rescue IF it can be performed **safely**, ("Throw, row, and go.")
  - a. First, **throw** something out to the person.
  - b. If the victim can't be reached, or there is nothing to throw, consider attempting to rescue the person from a boat, if a suitable boat is immediately available.

- c. Officers should generally not enter the water to make a rescue unless they are trained and equipped to do so. If officers decide to do so in a situation where no boat is available, the following must be considered:
  1. Is the officer a strong swimmer, AND
  2. Is the water still (a lake, not river), AND
  3. Does the officer feel they can save a life without undue risk to themselves, they should:
    - Remove their gun belt, radio, vest, shirt, and footwear.
    - Advise dispatch they are entering the water.
  
5. Remain at the scene to advise, assist, and confer with Fire personnel. Duties may include providing information, interviewing witnesses, protecting Fire equipment from theft, maintaining a downstream observation point, conducting a bank search, and/or scene control/security.

#### **4.19.3 WATER RESCUE TEAM (Eugene Fire)**

- a. The Water Rescue Team (WRT) functions under Fire Operations.
- b. The WRT may be called out:
  1. For water-related emergencies which cannot be handled by on-scene officers;
  2. For any water-related search for bodies or evidence where divers or boats could assist;
  3. For an on-going police investigation where the WRT is needed; or
  4. When WRT members are needed to preserve evidence or testify.
- c. Request this team in emergency situations through Communications. Non-emergency requests should be made through the on-duty Fire District Chief.
- d. If the incident becomes a search, the WRT supervisor will notify LCSO, as required by state statute. If LCSO responds to the request, by law they assume command of the incident.
- e. If the incident involves an investigation outside the city and will incur overtime, commanders must locate funding.

#### **4.19.4 INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

- a. If this is a crime, advise a supervisor.

- b. If this is not a crime, title the report “Water Incident”, and include identity of Fire responders.
- c. If requested by Fire, impound for safekeeping all property of the victim that cannot be safely released to others.