

El Dorado County Fire Protection District

Standard Operating Procedures

Article: 3 Emergency Operations
Section: 23 ECF Rescue Boat Operations

Adopted: 02-17-2022
Revised:

1. Purpose

- To promote safe guidelines for operating both motorized and non-motorized boats in the water environment. The District has many lakes and rivers within its boundaries that have caused incidents that include water rescues, boating accidents, and remote area rescues. If needed, the District can deploy the proper boat according to the incidents needs. Any requests by an outside agency must be approved by the Duty Chief.

2. Definitions

- **Boat**- Inflatable boat with motor
- **Hazard** – Any object that can cause damage to personnel, boat, or engine.
- **Operator**- District approved personnel who is responsible for the boat & crew.
- **Raft**- White water rated inflatable floating platform used as a boat.
- **Rescue Swimmer** – District approved personnel who has passed minimum qualifications set by the training division.
- **Spotter**- An individual who is at the bow of the boat looking for hazards.
- **Static Water**- Water with no current or less than one knot
- **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, Class III: rapids with high, irregular waves, requiring complex maneuvering, Class IV: long, difficult rapids with constricted passages, Class V: Extremely difficult.
- **Flat Water** – Body of water that is free of current and or sheltered from excessive wind.
- **Swim Test**- Annual swim proficiency test that is required for any personnel to enter the water.
- **IDLH**- Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health.

3. Guideline

- Any incident occurring on or near a body of water is reason to bring one of the Districts boats. If time allows, it is the preferred rescue method to reduce the risk of injury or exposure to both rescuers and victims.
 - ⊖ Boat 17 should be used to access areas that are inaccessible by non-motorized vessels or to cover a large distance by water.
 - Raft 74/17 should be considered anytime there is a river rescue. The rafts maneuverability and floatation are superior to any rescue swimmer.
- Only District personnel who have who have successfully completed District Training requirements in that water environment may be allowed to operate the boat.
 - Boat 17 Operators must have the following:
 - Static Water Use- CA Boating License and to pass District Training Standards for flat water.

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- Swift Water Use- CA Boating license, approved rescue boat operator course and has the rescue swimmer qualifications.
- Raft 74/17 Operators must have the following:
 - Static Water Use- pass annual swim test.
 - Swift Water Use- required to be rescue swimmer qualified and have passed the District Training Standards.
- Only qualified personnel who have successfully completed the District Training requirements in a water environment may be allowed in a boat.
 - Boat 17 Crewmembers must have the following:
 - Static Water Use- pass annual swim test.
 - Swift Water Use- rescue swimmer qualified.
 - Raft 74/17 Crewmembers must have the following:
 - Static Water Use- pass annual swim test.
 - Swift Water Use- rescue swimmer qualified.

4. Operations

- Prior to any launch, the operator must ensure that those in the boat have passed the appropriate swim test for the environment they are entering.
- Appropriate level of PPE will be worn for the expected water conditions.
- A risk assessment should be completed before launch and equipment needs determined.
- A briefing should be conducted with the crew outlining what their assignments will be, plan for entry, victim contact and egress.
- Maintain communications with resources on land.
- Use a spotter(s).
- Do not tie the victim to the boat or any equipment that could restrict their ability to swim if the boat were to flip.
- Victim care may need to be modified until you return to land and exit the IDLH environment.
- Use of other agency personnel:
 - Boat 17- must be qualified as a Rescue Swimmer by their department.
 - Raft 74/17- must be qualified as a Rescue Swimmer by their department.

5. Loading and Transporting

- a. Raft 74- stored at Station 74. Resides on top of Air 72 which is a one-ton pickup with a flat top service bed. It is advised to use the electric pump in the passenger side compartment to “top off” the raft and tighten the 4 straps before departing. Air 72 is a manual transmission.
- b. Boat 17- stored at Station 17. It has a dedicated trailer that it rests on at all times. Trailer shall be properly connected to hitch with safety chains and wiring harness attached. Any vehicle with a hitch and wiring harness will do. When responding to high elevation lakes, do not top off the boat before departure.