

Falmouth Fire-EMS Operating Guideline

Ice Rescue

Objective:

To provide all members with basic ice rescue procedures and equipment.

General Information:

Ice rescue equipment is carried on all Falmouth Fire-EMS engine companies. Engine 1 and Engine 4 both carry two ice rescue suits, two sets of ropes, two sets of ice picks and a throw bag. Engine 2 carries four ice rescue suits, four sets of ropes, four sets of ice picks, a throw bag and various other utility rope bags.

Guidelines:

1. The initial response to a report of a person or persons in an unsafe position on the ice or through the ice is:
 - a) Two Engines, Chief /Duty Officer, Ambulance, and Utility 4.
 - b) All units will respond code 3 (lights and siren) unless advised otherwise by the officer in charge.
2. When the location is in the Harbor waters the US Coast Guard shall be requested and the Harbormaster will be notified.
3. Additional resources may be sent as requested or deemed appropriate according to the information received by dispatch. For multiple victims consider additional engine companies and ambulances. If Falmouth Fire-EMS personnel will be entering the ice or water for a rescue a 2nd Ambulance should be called to the scene to stand by for potential rehab.
4. The first unit(s) shall establish Command and perform a size-up of the situation. Additional units shall be called and unneeded units returned as indicated.
5. Establish voice contact with the victim(s) as soon as possible to determine the exact number of victims involved including some that may be under the surface. Additionally, the victim(s) must be assessed for condition especially if multiple trips will be required to retrieve all victims.
6. One person should be assigned to maintain visual and voice contact with the victim(s) at all times.
7. Rescue attempts shall follow the risk order of "Reach, Throw, Go". Attempts shall be made to advise the victim(s) on self-rescue, reaching with pike poles "Reach" or using throw bags "Throw" when appropriate in order to reduce the hazards posed by a "Go" rescue.

8. When a "Go" rescue is initiated a single rescuer wearing an ice water rescue suit shall proceed to the victim(s). This rescuer shall be attached to the end of a retrieval line. An additional rescuer in an ice water rescue suit will standby on shore attached to a second retrieval line as a safety backup. The retrieval line will be tended by a shore crew.
 - a) If Falmouth Fire-EMS personnel are entering the ice or water a 2nd Ambulance needs to be called to the scene and dedicated as firefighter Rehab.
9. A backup team of 2 rescuers wearing an ice water rescue suit will be formed and stand by on the shore ready to assist or perform a needed rescue of the first team. This team will be secured to a safety line.
10. When the initial rescuer has secured the victim(s) he/she shall signal for retrieval by placing a hand on top of his/her head. The shore crew shall haul the victim(s) and rescuer to shore. The rescuer may signal the crew to stop hauling by raising a hand straight up above the head.
11. In the event that multiple victims are present additional ice water rescue suited personnel may be deployed. These personnel shall also be tethered as above. If multiple rescuers are on the ice / in the water, then additional safety personnel should be suited up and in place. A minimum of two rescuers must be staged in ice rescue suits for a potential rescue of personnel.
12. Rope throw bags may be used for both ice and water rescue of persons able to grasp the rope. Retrieval lines may also be used for water or ice rescue and are intended to be attached to the rescuer to allow retrieval of the victim and rescuer together with the assistance of a shore group. These ropes shall be equipped with a carabiner at each. The carabiner at the top of the rope bag shall be attached to the rescuer's harness.

These guidelines may be changed or altered by the Fire Chief at any time.