

Genesee County Association of Fire Chief's Recommended Operating Guidelines

SUBJECT: Emergency Incident Rehabilitation 95-1

Effective 09-01-95
Revised June 2017
Review June 2021

SCOPE

This guideline as a requirement of the Incident Management System (IMS) using the NFPA Guideline 1584, shall apply to all emergency operations and training exercises where strenuous physical activity or exposure to heat or cold exists and may be a factor to the health and welfare of firefighters.

PURPOSE

The physical and mental demands associated with fire fighting and other emergency operations, coupled with the environmental dangers of extreme heat and humidity or extreme cold, create conditions that can have an adverse impact upon the safety and health of individual firefighters. Firefighters who are not provided adequate rest and re-hydration during an emergency operation or training exercise are at increased risk of illness, injury and may jeopardize the safety of others.

This guideline is to insure that the physical and mental condition of firefighters who are operating at an emergency incident or training exercise do not deteriorate to the point that it affects the safety of each firefighter or jeopardize the safety and integrity of the operation.

RULES

- (1) Rehabilitation shall commence when fire/emergency operations and/or training exercises pose a health and safety risk.
- (2) Rehabilitation shall be established for large-scale incidents, long-duration and/or physically demanding incidents, and extreme temperatures.
- (3) The incident commander shall establish rehabilitation according to the circumstances of the incident.

The rehabilitation process shall include the following:

- (a) Rest
- (b) Hydration to replace lost body fluids
- (c) Cooling (passive and/or active)
- (d) Warming
- (e) Medical monitoring
- (f) Emergency medical care if required
- (g) Relief from extreme climatic conditions (heat, cold, wind, rain)
- (h) Calorie and electrolyte replacement
- (i) Accountability
- (j) Release from scene

RESPONSIBILITIES

Incident Commander

The incident commander shall be responsible for the following:

- (1) Include rehabilitation in incident/event size-up
- (2) Establish a rehabilitation group to reduce adverse physical effects on fire fighter while operating during fire/emergencies, training exercises, and extreme weather conditions
- (3) Designate and assign a supervisor to manage rehabilitation
- (4) Ensure sufficient resources are assigned to rehabilitation
- (5) Ensure EMS personnel are available for emergency medical care of fire fighters as required and indicate if the EMS crews are for "Stand-by" or "Rehab".
- (6) Provide to the EMS crew assigned to Rehab the Emergency Incident Rehabilitation Forms.

Rehab Officer

The rehab officer shall be responsible for the following:

- (1) Don a rehab vest
- (2) Whenever possible, select a location for rehabilitation with the following site characteristics:
 - (a) Large enough to accommodate the number of personnel expected (including EMS personnel for medical monitoring)
 - (b) Have a separate area for members to remove personal protective equipment
 - (c) Be accessible for an ambulance and EMS personnel should emergency medical care be required
 - (d) Be removed from hazardous atmospheres including apparatus exhaust fumes, smoke, and other toxins
 - (e) Provide shade in summer and protection from inclement weather at other times
 - (f) Have access to a water supply (bottled or running) to provide for hydration and active cooling
 - (g) Be away from spectators and media with no spectators and media contact.
- (3) Ensure personnel in rehabilitation “dress down” by removing their bunker coats, helmets, hoods, and opening bunker pants to promote cooling
- (4) Provide the required resources for rehabilitation including the following:
 - (a) Portable drinking water for hydration
 - (b) Sports drinks (to replace electrolytes and calories) for long duration incidents (working more than one hour)
 - (c) Active cooling where required
 - (d) Medical monitoring equipment (chairs to rest on, blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, check sheets, etc.)
 - (e) Food where required and a means to wash or clean hands and face prior to eating (Provide hand cleanser or cleaning wipes inside Coordinators Command Trailer)
 - (f) Blankets and warm, dry clothing for winter months
 - (g) Washroom facilities where required
- (5) Ensure that all personnel receive an objective evaluation of their fatigue level. Rest shall not be less than 10 minutes and may exceed 1 hour, as determined by the Rehab officer and EMS crew.
- (6) Ensure personnel re-hydrate themselves
- (7) Ensure personnel are provided with a means to be actively cooled where required
- (8) Maintain accountability and remain within rehabilitation at all times. Communications with the Staging officer is vital.
- (9) Document members entering or leaving rehabilitation
- (10) Inform the incident commander and accountability officer (resource status unit), if a member requires transportation to and treatment at a medical facility
- (11) Serve as a liaison with EMS personnel in the Rehab area.
- (12) Ensure that all personnel leaving Rehab report back to the staging officer.

Company Officers:

- (1) Be familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat stress and cold stress
- (2) Monitor their company members for signs of heat stress and cold stress
- (3) Notify the IC when stressed members require relief, rotation, or reassignment according to conditions
- (4) Provide access to rehabilitation for company members as needed
- (5) Ensure that their company is properly checked in with the rehabilitation manager and accountability officer (resource unit), and that the company remains intact

Crew Members:

- (1) Be familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat and cold stress
- (2) Maintain awareness of themselves and company for signs and symptoms of heat stress and cold stress
- (3) Promptly inform the company officer when members require rehabilitation and/or relief from assigned duties
- (4) Maintain unit integrity

EMS personnel:

- (1) Report to the incident commander and obtain the rehabilitation requirements
- (2) Coordinate with the rehabilitation officer
- (3) Identify the EMS personnel requirements
- (4) Follow the GCMCA Medical Evaluation and Rehabilitation of Public Safety Personnel protocol.
- (5) Document medical monitoring on the Emergency Incident Rehabilitation Form
- (6) Provide emergency medical care and transportation to medical facilities as required
- (7) Inform the rehabilitation Officer when personnel require transportation
- (8) Document emergency medical care provided

PROCEDURES

- (1) All personnel shall maintain hydration on an ongoing basis (pre-incident, incident, post incident)
- (2) Members shall be sent to rehabilitation as required by the Incident Commander
- (3) All members shall be sent to rehabilitation following the use of two 30-minute SCBA cylinders or one 45-60 minute SCBA cylinder. Shorter times might be considered during extreme weather conditions. The Incident Commander may require stricter rehabilitation times depending on the incident.
- (4) Active cooling (e.g., forearm immersion, misting fans) shall be applied where temperatures, conditions, and/or workload create the potential for heat stress.
- (5) In hot, humid conditions, a minimum of 10 minutes (20 minutes is preferable) of active cooling shall be applied following the use of the second and each subsequent SCBA cylinder.
- (6) Personnel in rehabilitation shall rest for a minimum of 10 minutes prior to being reassigned or released.
- (7) EMS personnel shall provide medical monitoring and emergency medical care as per medical protocol.
- (8) Personnel transported to a medical facility for treatment shall be accompanied by a department representative (as long as it does not delay transport needed emergently). If a member of a mutual aid company is sent to a medical care center with an officer or another person, the rest of the crew may be released back to their department.
- (9) Members should drink water during rehabilitation. After the first hour, a sports drink containing electrolytes should be provided. Soda and caffeinated and carbonated beverage should be avoided.
- (10) Nutritional snacks or meals shall be provided as required during longer duration incidents.
- (11) No tobacco smoking or chewing use shall be permitted in or near the rehabilitation area.

ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement of this guideline will be the direct responsibility of the Genesee County Association of Fire Chief's, the officers and firefighters of the member departments within Genesee County.