



LANCASTER FIRE DEPARTMENT OPEN WATER RESCUE TRAINING SKILL SHEETS

(JULY 2012)

Possible Locations of Open-Water Rescue Incidents in Lancaster:

- Spectacle Pond
- Little Spectacle Pond
- Fort Pond
- White Pond
- Nashua River

Open Water Rescue Training Will Focus on **4** Basic Concepts:

REACH – THROW – ROW - GO

REACH: Victim(s) are located close to the shoreline and the rescuer(s) can retrieve them by reaching with their persons, rescue pole or hook, an oar, a backboard, etc without having to enter the water. Victim(s) must be conscious, alert, and able to grab and hold on to the reaching device for this method to be considered.

THROW: Victim(s) are too far away from the shoreline to be reached with a rigid object. Rescuers can throw ropes, rope bags, flotation rings or discs tied to a rope, a PDF tied to a rope, etc. to retrieve the victim without having to enter the water. Victim(s) must be conscious, alert, and able to grab and hold on to the thrown object for this method to be considered.

ROW: Victim(s) are too far away from the shoreline to be reached or to have a flotation device thrown to them. Rescuers must use a boat or approved watercraft to access and retrieve the victim(s) without having to enter the water. Once close enough to the victim(s), rescuers can Reach, Throw, or lift them directly into the boat (whichever method is easiest and safest). Victim(s) may be conscious and alert or unconscious.

GO: Rescuers must physically enter the water and swim to the victim(s) to retrieve them. This method may be used from the shoreline or from a boat depending on the circumstances. This method is typically used for unconscious victims but may also be used for conscious and alert victims that are in distress or unable to grab and hold on to a flotation device. Only those rescuers, who are strong swimmers, should enter the water to retrieve a victim.

KEY ITEMS TO REMEMBER FOR ANY WATER RESCUE:

- **COMMUNICATION IS KEY!!!:** Rescuers on and off shore should be in constant communication with each other as well as the victim(s). Those rescuers not directly retrieving the victims need to be the eyes and ears or “spotters” for those rescuers that are retrieving the victims.
- **PERSONAL SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT:** We are trying to rescue the victims already in the water, not create new ones! All rescuers in or near the water **MUST** be wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs). All rescuers on shore should also be wearing PFDs when possible. A rescuer should never remove his or her PFD and place it on a victim. Whenever possible, rescuers should tie themselves off to a stationary object on shore to prevent being pulled into the water (i.e., trees, rocks, pylons, buildings, apparatus, etc.).
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE!:** Rescuers should try to avoid entering the water whenever possible. Don't Throw, Row, or Go if a victim can easily be reached from the shoreline.
- **BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS:** During any incident, rescuers need to be alert and aware of the hazards around them. Be sure to consider the weather, hazards on the shoreline, hazards in the water, currents, other watercraft, etc. when planning any type of open water rescue.

SKILLS STATIONS

STATION 1: REACH:

Station 1 will involve the combination of 2 different skill sets. The first will be practicing the retrieval of a victim from the water using the REACH method. The second skill will involve C-Spine stabilization and immobilization of the victim while the victim is still in the water.

SCENARIO 1 (REACH): A victim is in distress in the water a short distance away from the shoreline. 2 to 3 rescuers will attempt to retrieve the victim and pull them ashore using the REACH method and without entering the water.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- PFDs for the victim in the water and for each rescuer on shore.
 - Rigid object like a lifeguard hook, pike pole, boat oar, etc.
 - Life Safety Rope Bag (50-75 ft)
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- Victim enters the water and remains 6 – 8 feet from the shoreline.
 - Rescuers 1 and 2 approach the shoreline, call out to the victim, and verify that they are conscious and alert and will be able to grab and hold on to a rescue device.
 - Rescuer 1 ties off to a stationary object on shore. Rope can be attached to Rescuer One's belt or PFD.
 - Rescuer 2 supports Rescuer 1 by holding on to Rescuer 1's belt or PFD. If there are more than 2 Rescuers, form a chain heading inland.
 - Rescuer 1 reaches out to the victim with a rigid rescue device of appropriate length. If using a pike pole or hook, the handle end should be extended to the victim, not the hook end.
 - Position the pole or hook to the side of the victim about an arm's length away.
 - Once the victim has grabbed on to the rescue device, make sure they have a good grip on it and are ready to be pulled to shore.
 - On Rescuer 1's command, each Rescuer moves in unison to pull the victim to shore.
 - Once the victim is safely on shore, he can be stabilized and packaged for transport.

SCENARIO 2 (SHALLOW WATER BACKBOARDING): A victim is in distress in the water and has suffered a possible spinal injury. The victim is conscious and alert but is unable to swim to shore or move because of their injuries. 2 – 3 Rescuers will enter the water and attempt to immobilize the victim on a long spine board before removing them from the water.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- PFDs for each Rescuer
- Long Spine Board (floating) complete with all straps and Head Blocks

Treat these practices as if they were real.

It is crucial

- that if the rescue is taking place in moving water you move to a sheltered area if possible;
- that you maintain in-line stabilization;
- that no one swims under the board;
- that the person holding head/neck never lets go to do anything else;
- if things get messed up, you go back in steps carefully instead of giving up;
- that you have calm communication during problems (the victim is hearing everything you say!);
- and, (once they get face up at the surface), that the victim's face (mouth and nose) is out of the water all the time.

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- Rescuer 1 activates the emergency action plan. Don't give a big, long speech to the other Rescuers about getting various pieces of equipment. The victim may well be sinking and needs your attention.
 - Enter the water carefully, using a slide-in entry. Don't make any big waves, either on your first entrance or approaching the victim.
 - Approach a face down victim from the side. Grasp the victim's arms midway between the elbow and the shoulder. Put your right hand on their right arm, your left hand on their left arm. Gently squeeze the victim's arms to their head and keep them squeezed so their head stays in line with their body. Victim's arms will cross at the wrists when you have a tight squeeze and the head is really trapped by the arms. The head must stay squeezed.
 - Lower yourself down to water level (shoulder depth) so you won't lift the victim up out of the water on the next step. Walk and glide the victim slowly forward, so their legs might come up to the surface and their body might be in a straighter line.
 - While still moving the victim forward, roll them towards you until they are face up and their face is out of the water. Their head should be close to the crook of your arm and their arms must remain squeezed against their head so that their head stays in line with the rest of their body. Keep their face out of the water from now on.

- Confirm that the victim is conscious and breathing.
- The second rescuer gets the backboard, removes the head immobilizer, then submerges the board under the victim, then controls how fast it rises under the victim.
- It is crucial that the second rescuer make sure the top strap is in the correct place at the armpit before continuing through the strapping.
- If the board is in the wrong place, lower and move the board, do not try to move the victim forward and back. Do not tug or push on the victim's legs.
- When the backboard is in the right place, the primary rescuer can slide the arm that is under the victim slightly towards the top of the victim's head. They should carefully swing their lower elbow towards the top of the victim's head (while still squeezing the two arms to keep the head in line with the body and without moving the neck).
- The rescuer 2 then applies a head and chin support to the victim with their upper arm straight along the victim's sternum, hand at the chin and the other arm under the board, applying upward pressure. When they feel secure they must tell the primary rescuer that they have full control of the board.
- The first rescuer then slides their arm out from under the victim and lets the secondary rescuer take over in-line stabilization.
- The primary and additional rescuers can then finish strapping the victim to the board, applying the head blocks and straps last.
- With the victim completely immobilized on the board, each rescuer should position themselves on the sides of the board keeping the board close to their body.
- On the primary rescuers command, all rescuers begin moving the board towards the shore carefully, without creating waves and keeping the victims head and body above the water.

STATION 2: THROW:

Station 2 will involve practicing the THROW method of retrieving a victim from the water.

SCENARIO (THROW): A victim is in distress in the water at a distance that is too far away from the shore to safely reach them. 2 to 3 rescuers will attempt to retrieve the victim and pull them ashore using the THROW method and without entering the water.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- PFDs for the victim in the water and for each rescuer on shore.
 - Life Safety Rope THROW Bag (50 – 200 ft), or a water rescue flotation ring or disc.
 - Life Safety Rope Bag (50-75 ft)
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- Victim enters the water and remains 20 - 50 feet from the shoreline.
 - Rescuers 1 and 2 approach the shoreline, call out to the victim, and verify that they are conscious and alert and will be able to grab and hold on to a rescue device.
 - Rescuer 1 ties off to a stationary object on shore. Rope can be attached to Rescuer One's belt or PFD.
 - Rescuer 2 supports Rescuer 1 by holding on to Rescuer 1's belt or PFD. If there are more than 2 Rescuers, form a chain heading inland.
 - Rescuer 1 throws rescue device out to the victim making sure rope is of appropriate length. DO NOT LET GO OF THE ROPE!
 - When throwing rope bag, ring, or disc, try to get the rope to land to the side of the victim an arm's length away. Don't worry if you overshoot, with the ring or disc as the victim can grab the rope and pull the flotation device to them.
 - Once the victim has grabbed on to the rescue device, make sure they have a good grip on it and are ready to be pulled to shore.
 - On Rescuer 1's command, each Rescuer moves in unison to pull the victim to shore. If there is enough room on shore do so, hold the rope in one place and move inland to bring the victim to shore. If there is not enough room to move inland, use the hand-over-hand method to pull the victim to shore. If using this method Rescuers 2 and 3 should collect the rope to make sure it does not become a trip hazard.
 - Once the victim is safely on shore, he can be stabilized and packaged for transport.
 - When re-packing rescue rope bags, use the twist-in method to make sure the rope sits in the bag properly and will deploy correctly upon the next use.

STATION 3: ROW:

Station 3 will involve the combination of 2 different skill sets. The first will be deploying the rescue boat from the shoreline and becoming familiar with the equipment and how to operate it. The second will involve the retrieval of a victim from the water that is too far from the shore to use the REACH or THROW methods.

SCENARIO (Deploying the Boat): A victim is in distress in the water a long distance away from the shoreline and the boat is needed to retrieve them.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- PFDs for the victim in the water and for each rescuer in the boat.
 - Rescue boat with full accompaniment of equipment.
 - Life Safety Rope THROW Bag (50 – 200 ft), or a water rescue flotation ring or disc.
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- All available rescue personnel will be instructed on proper deployment and operation of the boat.
 - The recommended number of rescuers in the boat should be 2 – 3 maximum.
 - Upon getting the boat in the water, the operator will travel at a steady speed as not to create a wake or waves in the water. The operator should approach the victim from an angle and not head on or straight from the back.
 - All other rescuers in the boat need to be the eyes and ears for the operator and watch for hazards in the water.
 - If the boat can be positioned close enough to the victim to pull them directly into the boat, do so but as safely as possible.
 - If the victim is conscious and alert, have them grab on to the side of the boat and help them don PFD in the water if possible.
 - Rescuers should keep their center of gravity low in the boat, distributing their weight evenly as to not cause the boat to capsize.
 - Grab the victim low around the waist and pull them carefully up out of the water and into the boat. Once the victim is in the boat, assist them in donning PFD if not already done.
 - If the boat cannot be safely positioned close enough to the victim to pull them directly into the boat, use the REACH or THROW methods to get them close enough.

STATION 4: GO:

Station 4 will involve practicing the GO method of retrieving a victim from the water.

SCENARIO (GO): A victim is in distress in the water at a distance that is too far away from the shore to safely reach them, and the victim is incapable of grabbing and holding on to a rescue device. 2 to 3 rescuers will attempt to retrieve the victim and pull them to shore or to the boat using the GO method, where one rescuer must enter the water to retrieve the victim.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- PFDs for the victim in the water and for each rescuer on shore or in the boat.
 - Life Safety Rope (50 – 200 ft), or a water rescue flotation ring or disc.
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- If using the boat, approach the victim using steps practiced for the ROW method. If retrieving the victim from shore, the rescuer entering the water should do so without creating excess wake or waves.
 - Before entering the water, the GO rescuer must be tied off with a life safety rope and the rope should be tied off to a stationary object on shore or in the boat.
 - When entering the water from the boat, sit on the side rails facing inward and fall backwards into the water being careful not to create large waves or capsize the boat.
 - The rescuer entering the water should be a strong swimmer and should approach the victim from an angle and not head on.
 - Once the rescuer has reached the victim, the rescuer should position themselves behind the victim. Try to keep the victim calm.
 - If possible, the GO rescuer can bring a PFD with them for the victim and should assist them with donning the PFD while still in the water.
 - Once the victim has donned the PFD, the GO rescuer will place his arms underneath the armpits of the victim and across the victims chest.
 - When both the rescuer and victim are ready to be pulled to shore or the boat, the rescuer will signal by tapping the top of his head with the palm of their hand.
 - The rescuers in the boat can then begin to pull the GO rescuer and victim into the boat safely and in unison.
 - If at any time the GO rescuer requires the rescuers in the boat to stop pulling, he should make a fist and hold it straight up above his head.
 - Once the rescuer and the victim are to the boat, the rescuers in the boat will safely pull the victim on board first, followed by the GO rescuer.