I. SCOPE
This procedure applies to all members of the Pocono Search and Rescue that are responsible for emergency response. It is designed for life saving response to a water emergency response.

II. PURPOSE
The purpose of this procedure is to provide a guideline for conducting all water rescue/recovery operations.

III. STANDARD RESPONSE AND DISPATCH
Upon receiving a dispatch from Monroe County Communications Center (in county) or our local emergency number (out of county) for a water rescue, Pocono Search and Rescue will respond with (2) two short tenders, (1) one go rescuer, and one officer as an initial scene size up team. 79 Rescue 1 will respond in emergency mode with lights and siren activated. A crew maximum of 5 members will respond in 79 Rescue 1. All occupants of 79 Rescue 1 SHALL BE SEAT BELTED PRIOR TO RESPONSE. The chauffeur will drive at all times with due regard to public safety.

IV. TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS
A water rescue incident is best organized into four phases. The first phase involves fire personnel arriving on scene, initiating command, and performing a size up. The second phase includes pre-rescue operations to prepare fire personnel for victim removal. The third phase includes rescue operations and victim removal. The fourth phase involves termination of the incident.

V. SIZE UP
The first phase involves fire personnel arriving on scene, initiating command, and performing a size up. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase one of a water rescue.
1. First arriving company officer should take Command and begin an immediate size-up of the situation.
2. Secure responsible party or witness. Command should secure a witness as soon as possible after arriving on scene. This will help in identifying the problem and locating the victim.
3. Assess the hazards. Command should do an immediate assessment of the present hazards. Command may want to assign an individual the Safety Officer. Safety Officer will be responsible for identifying the hazards present and to have them secured if possible. If it is not possible to secure hazards, Safety Officer will notify all personnel of the hazards and notify Command so that an action plan can be established. Some hazards associated with water rescue operations would be: volume, velocity, and temperature of water, floating debris, unusual drop-offs, hydraulic effects, and depth of water.

4. Decide on rescue or recovery. Based on the conditions present and the hazards to rescuers, Command will have to make the decision to operate in the rescue or recovery mode. If Command determines that the operation will be run in the rescue mode, rescue should begin quick.

5. Decide on an action plan. Command should establish an action plan as soon as possible. The step-by-step plan should be communicated to all personnel involved in the rescue.

VI. PRE-RESCUE OPERATIONS
The second phase involves fire personnel preparing to conduct the rescue. Phase two includes making the general area safe, making the rescue area safe, and establishing a Rescue Group. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase two of a water rescue.

1. Make the general area safe. Command or his/her designee should begin to make the general area safe. On water rescue operations, this would include securing the area and not allowing civilian personnel in to the water. In swift-water rescue incidents, Command should assign an Upstream Lookout to spot floating debris and notify Command or Rescue Group. Command may also want to assign a helicopter the task of aerial recon for spotting hazards.

2. Make the rescue area safe. Command should secure the immediate rescue area. He/she may want to assign an Accountability Officer to account for all personnel working within the rescue area. Personnel working in the rescue area (waters edge) shall have personal protective equipment (PPE), including personal flotation device (PFD) and water rescue helmet, at no time should turn-out gear or fire helmets be worn around the waters edge. If at all possible, the hazards in the rescue area should be secured. If it is not possible, Command or his/her designee shall notify all rescuers in the area of the possible hazards.

3. Decide if it is a pre-rescue or recovery situation. Depending on the action plan established, Command may want to establish a Rescue Group. Rescue Group will be responsible for gathering all equipment and personnel necessary to operate according to the action plan. Rescue Group will assign rescue personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase. Rescue Group should have an alternative action plan should the first choice plan fail. This alternate plan should be communicated to all personnel operating in the rescue area.

4. Consider ambient conditions. Extreme heat or cold will require more rescuers. Consider the affects of rain or snow on the hazard profile. Plan for sufficient lighting for operations extending into the night.
5. Consider the affect on family and friends. Keep the family informed of operations.
6. Assign a Public Information Officer to handle the news media.

VII. RESCUE OPERATIONS
After pre-rescue operations are complete, Rescue Group shall put forth the action plan removal of the victim(s). Rescue operations should be conducted with from low risk to high risk. Rescues should be conducted with the least amount of risk to rescuers necessary to rescue the victim. Low risk operations are not always possible but should be considered first. If the rescue of the victim(s) is only possible by means of a high risk operation, Rescue Group shall communicate with Command the risk/benefit of the operation. Command should assign downstream personnel, with throw bags, and an opposite water-side/bank-side Division for incidents involving swift-water rescue. The order of water rescue from low risk to high risk will be:

Talk the Victim Into Self Rescue
If possible, the victim can be talked into swimming to shore or assisting the rescuers with his/her own rescue. If a victim is stranded in the middle of a flash flood, this will not be prudent.

Reach to the Victim
If possible, the rescuer should extend his/her hand or some other object, such as a pike pole, to remove the victim from the water.

Throw to the Victim
If the victim is too far out in the water to reach, rescuer(s) should attempt to throw the victim a throw bag or some piece of positive flotation (i.e., PFD, rescue ring). Downstream personnel should be in position during the actual rescue operation. If the victim is able to grab the throw bag, the rescuer can pendulum belay or haul the victim to the nearest bank. Care should be taken to assure the victim will be belayed to a safe downstream position.
First responders that have had operational level water rescue training should be able to conduct the above rescues without the help of Pocono Search and Rescue. If the victim cannot be reached by either of these methods, Command should consider stopping the operation until additional resources arrive. If the operation becomes a high risk one, Command will want additional water rescue and technical rescue assets dispatched to the scene. After the Technical Rescue Team arrives, Command should discuss with them the action plan. Command should consider re-assigning the Rescue Group to a company officer from the SART.

Row to the Victim
If it is determined that a boat based operation shall be run, Command should assign a company on the opposite bank to assist Rescue Group in establishing an anchor for a rope system. The company on the opposite bank will be made aware of the action plan. Rescue Group will be responsible for seeing that the rope system used for the boat based operation is built safe and proper. A minimum of 2 point tether should be built for swift-water operations. Rescue should consider personal protective equipment (PPE) for victim(s).

Go to the Victim
If it is not possible to row (boat base operation) to the victim, Rescue Group
should consider putting a rescuer in the water to reach the victim. This is a very high risk operation. Only rescuers with the proper training and equipment should be allowed to enter the water. Prior to the rescuer actually proceeding into the water, he/she shall discuss the action plan, including specific tasks and objectives, hazards and alternate plans. The rescuer shall never be attached to a life line without the benefit of a quick-release mechanism. The rescuer should take PPE of at least a PFD to the victim. Members shall not do a breath-hold surface dive in an attempt to locate a victim beneath the surface of the water.

Once the rescuer(s) have reached the victim, they should do an immediate assessment of the victim; a quick assessment of the ABC’s and the exact method of entrapment. If the victim is conscious, the rescuer should determine if the victim can assist in his/her own rescue. If the victim is unconscious, the rescue must be quick. If it has been determined to be an underwater or recovery operation, Rescue should notify Command to have a dive team respond to help with the incident. Depending on the length of submersion, Rescue Group will decide on a dive rescue or recovery operation. If the victim can assist in his/her own rescue, the rescuers should proceed with the rescue action plan. The victim should be brought to shore as soon as possible.

As soon as the victim is brought to safety, an assessment should be done by ALS personnel. Treatment shall be administered as per local protocol. If necessary, the victim shall be transported to the appropriate facility.

Upon arrival, the FIRST Water Rescue trained personnel shall assume the position of Officer In Charge until a higher trained rescuer or line officer arrives. If EMS is not already on scene, a MINIMUM of 2 BLS (Basic Life Support) units should be requested, and if resources allow, 1 ALS (advanced Life Support Unit) should be requested. A. Additional Technical Rescue assistance request should be made if it has not been requested upon the arrival of the OIC.

2.3 Any rescue personnel arriving at a Water Rescue incident shall report to the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the scene prior to taking up any rescue position.

2.4 All water rescue personnel responding to a water or Ice Rescue incident shall be equipped with a minimum of a Type III PFD, Water Rescue approved helmet, and Water Rescue throw bag. OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT: Wet/ Dry Suit, Water Rescue approved footwear, mask and snorkel.

2.5 ALL Water Rescue PFD’s shall be equipped with a minimum of a Water Rescue approved whistle, strobe light or luminescent glow stick, knife and 2 steel locking carabiners.

2.6 All water rescue techniques, procedures and policies shall follow the PA Fish & Boat commission guidelines as its primary source of guidance and when working as mutual aid with the Monroe County Water Emergency Task Force, use the MCWETF SOG’s. Self Rescue- Assist the victim into self rescue by getting a minimum of a PFD and helmet to them and instructing them on how to safely rescue themselves. Shore Based Rescue- Throw bags, reaching with poles and other safety equipment.
Boat Based rescue- Boats should always approach from downstream whenever possible with proper equipment for the rescuers and victim.

Go Rescue- The rescue swimmer shall be tethered with a safety line, enter the water using recommended techniques.

2.7 Any person within 25 feet of ANY water source SHALL don a minimum of a PFD, and helmet.

2.8 A safety officer shall be designated for ANY Water Rescue incident. Safety officers do NOT have to be the Chief or highest ranking line officer on scene.

2.9 ONLY personnel who have completed BOTH Water Rescue Response, and Advanced Lines Systems class shall attempt a GO Rescue.

2.10 A static tension safety line shall be set up downstream of the victim in a position that is advantageous and feasibly accessible in relationship to the victim. A minimum of 4 shore based rescuers shall be set up downstream of the victim, 2 on the river left and 2 on the river left.

There shall be one Technician Level Rescuer downstream of the tension safety line as a last resort if the victim is not caught by the tension line. There shall be a spotter UPSTREAM of the incident at least ¼ to ½ mile to look for debris and hazards in the water coming downstream.

For Boat Based Rescues, all Boat Operators MUST have a PA Fish & Boat Commission (PAF&BC) Boaters Operator Certificate, AND MUST complete the PAF&BC Boat Operations Course PRIOR to operating a boat on a Rescue Scene.

All boat operators are responsible to ensure that ALL boats in their control have ALL proper required equipment as well as a MINIMUM of 2 ADULT PFD’s and 1 CHILD PFD, 2 Rescue throw bags, and 4 steel locking karabiners.

All GO rescue attempts shall be made ONLY after ALL other methods have been exhausted.

All line systems shall use static kern mantle rope of 12mm or ½ inch in diameter.

All anchors shall be of an approved type such as tensionless anchor, rap 3 pull2 webbing anchors.

All throw bags shall be of polypropylene or other suitable material such as Spectra rope

All line systems shall follow Pa Fish & Boat Commission guidelines and standards.
Any team member responding to a flood evacuation or disaster response call dealing with waterborne operations SHALL don the minimum Water Rescue PPE, including a dry suit.

VIII. TERMINATION
Command should begin termination as soon as possible after the victim has been removed from the water. This shall include securing all the equipment used for the rescue and personnel accountability. This may also include witnesses, photos, victim's personal affects or equipment used in the rescue. Members should not become part of a towing operation to remove vehicles from the water. One company should stand by for rescue if a tow truck driver insists on retrieving the vehicle. Command should also consider critical incident stress debriefing for extraordinary or extended operations. The following procedures should be followed when performing phase four of a water rescue.
1. Maintain personnel accountability
2. Maintain equipment accountability. If there has been a fatality, Rescue Group may consider leaving tools and equipment in place for investigative purposes.
3. Re-stock vehicles
4. Consider debriefing
5. Secure the scene
6. Return apparatus and personnel to service