

Grant County Fire Protection District 3

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

TACTICAL ACTION GUIDELINES

1. NUMBER: 9.1.16
2. SUBJECT: *Boating Operations*
3. POLICY: It shall be the policy of Grant County Fire District #3 to provide boating operations, enabling safe and effective response to water-based incidents, and ensuring personnel and public safety. This Policy and Procedure is established to define that process.
4. SCOPE: This Policy and Procedure is applicable to all personnel of Grant County Fire District #3.
5. RESPONSIBILITIES:
 - A. The District Fire Chief is responsible for ensuring that this Policy and Procedure is adhered to.
 - B. All personnel are responsible for complying with this Policy and Procedure.
6. DEFINITIONS:
 - A. Boating Operations: The use of powered or non-powered watercraft for fire district emergency services.
 - B. Qualified Operator: A District member trained and authorized to operate District watercraft.
7. PERSONNEL REQUIREMENTS:
 - A. Refer to 09.01.02 Appendix A – Initial Minimum Personnel Response Standard.
8. PROCEDURE:
 - A. Activation: Boating operations may be initiated for incidents involving:
 1. Water rescues or recoveries
 2. Fires on or near bodies of water
 3. Medical events
 4. Mutual Aid assistance
 5. Special events requiring water safety presence
 6. Search operations in support of law enforcement or other agencies.

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B. Deployment Criteria:

1. Operations must be approved by the Duty Officer or Incident Commander.
2. A risk-benefit analysis shall be conducted prior to deployment and continually throughout the incident.
3. Weather, water, visibility, and environmental conditions shall be evaluated prior to launch.
4. Safety protocols and emergency contingencies must be briefed before launch.
5. A pre- and post-deployment checklist must be completed for every use.
6. On and Off Water status shall be communicated with MACC Dispatch.
7. The Incident Command System (ICS) shall be utilized for all emergency boating operations.

C. Operational Limitations

1. District personnel are not designated Rescue Swimmers and shall not intentionally enter the water to perform swimming rescues.
2. The District does not provide Swiftwater Rescue Technician-level operations.
3. Personnel shall operate from the boat, shoreline, dock, or other stable platform whenever possible.
4. Incidents requiring swiftwater rescue operations, technical rope access over water, or specialized dive operations shall require mutual aid requests for appropriately trained resources.
5. Boat towing or recovery operations are strongly discouraged and require approval from a Chief Officer. The District may assist mutual aid partners with boat towing or recovery when one of their own assets requires support.

D. Victim Contact & Rescue Operations

1. Whenever possible, victims shall be instructed to assist in their own rescue.
2. Victims recovered into District watercraft shall be assessed for medical needs and provided appropriate care.
3. The District trains using three separate rescue/retrieval methods. At times working outside of these methods may be necessary.
 - a. Victim assist using hasty rope step
 - b. Backboard Tilt method
 - c. Parbuckling

E. Emergency Procedures.

1. In the event of a person overboard, all operations shall immediately focus on recovery of the member.
2. Any vessel collision, unintentional grounding, mechanical failure, or significant safety event shall be immediately reported to the Incident

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Commander.

3. Operations shall be suspended whenever conditions present an unreasonable risk to personnel safety.

9. TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION:

- A. All personnel assigned to boating operations must complete:
 1. District-approved boating operations course
 2. Annual operational proficiency evaluation
 3. Annual Rescue Boat Awareness for crew
 4. Annual review of Grant County Drowning Protocol
- B. Training records will be maintained by the Training Officer.

10. EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE:

- A. All watercraft shall be subject to weekly inspection and regular maintenance by assigned apparatus personnel.
- B. Equipment lists shall be routinely updated and verified.
 1. Operational and safety equipment list.
 2. Fire Mitigation equipment list.
 3. Rescue/Recovery equipment List.
- C. Deficiencies affecting operational readiness shall be immediately reported and corrected prior to deployment whenever practical.

11. SAFETY:

- A. All boating operations must comply with U.S. Coast Guard and Washington State regulations.
- B. Personnel shall maintain situational awareness regarding weather, water conditions, vessel traffic, and other hazards.
- C. Alcohol, drugs, or medications that impair safe vessel operation are prohibited.

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12. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:

- A. Personnel must always wear Coast Guard-approved Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) in, on, or near water during boating operations.
- B. Appropriate footwear shall be worn during launch, recovery, and boat operations.
- C. Boating crew must always wear helmets during boating operations.
- D. Additional PPE may be required based on weather conditions, operational hazards, or Incident Commander direction.

13. DOCUMENTATION:

- A. Incident reports must include a summary of boating operations when deployed.
- B. Equipment failures or near misses must be reported using the District's incident reporting system.
- C. Significant incidents may be reviewed through the District's after-action review process to identify training, equipment, or procedural improvements.