HEALTH/SAFETY PROGRAM
REHABILITATION (REHAB)

Fire Department Town of Menasha
Standard Operating Guidelines

April, 2009
Section 4

4.34 Introduction:
The physical and mental demands associated with firefighting and other emergency operations, coupled with the environmental dangers of extreme heat/humidity or extreme cold, create conditions that may impact the safety and health of the responder. Members who are not provided adequate rest and rehydration during emergency operations or training are at risk for illness or injury and may jeopardize the safety of others on the incident scene/training site. When emergency responders become fatigued, their ability to operate safely is impaired, reaction times are reduced, and the ability to make crucial decisions diminishes. Rehab is a vital component of the incident scene in preventing the occurrence of serious health conditions.

4.35 Purpose:
To provide a comprehensive Rehab process for our members at emergency incidents, training activities, and other events that may have adverse effects on the firefighter’s ability to rest and recover. No member will be permitted to continue emergency operations beyond safe levels of physical or mental endurance. This guideline is intended to be used for training as well as during emergency responses where strenuous physical activity or exposure to heat and cold exists.

Frequently, a formal rehab area is not necessary at smaller incidents or training sites. The activity of recovering to a state of proper health and readiness should be addressed regardless of the scope and size of the activity.

4.36 Information Sources:
These guidelines were developed utilizing various resources. The following are a list of resources referenced for these guidelines:

1. NFPA 1500 - Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health
2. NFPA 1584 - Standard on the Rehabilitation Process for members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises
3. TMFD and Seattle Fire Dept SOG’s
4. USFA – Emergency Incident Rehabilitation

4.37 Definitions:

Hydration – A fluid balance between water lost by normal functioning and oral intake of fluids in the form of liquid and foods that contain water.

Rehabilitation (Rehab) – The process of providing rest, re-hydration, nourishment and medical evaluation to members who are involved in extended or extreme incident scene operations or training evolutions; to decrease the likelihood of injury or death.
Sports Drink – A fluid replacement beverage that is between 4% and 8% carbohydrate and contains between 0.5g and 0.7g of sodium per liter of solution.

Self-Rehab – The process of replenishing fluids and resting for a minimum of 10 minutes after the use of one SCBA bottle and/or a period of intense work. During self-rehab, firefighters do not need to report to the Rehab Sector, and vitals are not necessary.

4.38 Procedures:
Rehab shall be implemented at all working fires, strenuous training exercises, or during extended operations especially during times of extreme weather conditions (heat, cold, humidity).

1. The Incident Commander may elect to use Rehab at any time including structure fire operations, hazardous materials incidents, training exercises or special events; and during extreme temperature conditions. The Incident Commander shall assign a supervisor to manage Rehab.

2. The Division Chief of Training or other officer in charge of training may elect to use Rehab at any time during training exercises. The officer in charge of the training exercise shall assign a supervisor to manage Rehab.

3. The Rehab Sector shall be located a safe distance away from emergency operations and be able to accommodate the number of personnel expected. Accessibility for EMS personnel/ambulance should be provided. The location should be away from spectators and media if possible. Tobacco use shall not be permitted in this area.

4. The Incident Commander shall ensure that EMS personnel are available for emergency care of firefighters as required. At least one Advanced Life Support crew and EMS transport should be on scene.

5. The Rehab process shall include the following:
   a. Rest
   b. Hydration and calorie replacement (Minimum of 10oz.).
   c. Medical monitoring
   d. Emergency medical care if required.
   e. Relief from extreme climatic conditions (warming/cooling).
   f. Accountability

6. Personnel should perform self-rehab procedures as follows:
   a. Following the use of one SCBA cylinder.
   b. After 20 minutes of intense physical labor.
   c. Other times as necessary.
7. Personnel must report to the Rehab Sector as follows:
   a. Following the use of two SCBA cylinders.
   b. After 40 minutes of intense physical labor.
   c. When directed by an officer, or feel the need to do so.

8. The Safety Officer shall monitor environmental conditions and may request that the Incident Commander replace firefighters more frequently during extreme cold or heat conditions.

9. Upon entering the Rehab Sector, personnel will collect the accountability tags from crews and EMS will take a pulse rate. Any member with a pulse rate greater than 120 will be evaluated for blood pressure, body temperature and obvious illness. After a minimum of 20 minutes at rest, vitals will be reevaluated.

10. EMS personnel shall document medical monitoring and emergency care provided.

11. After REHAB evaluation has been completed, personnel will be assigned as follows:
   a. Returned to duty
   b. Removed from duty
   c. Transported to a medical facility for further evaluation

12. Any personnel who are transported to a medical facility should be accompanied by another department member.

13. During warm weather conditions, all members entering the Rehab area must remove coats, hoods, helmets and gloves. Bunker pants should be rolled down over the boots. Other cool down procedures such as forearm immersion may be implemented.

14. The Rehab Sector Officer will update command throughout the operation regarding crew and firefighter status. The basic function of Rehab needs to be addressed for each firefighter or emergency responder that enters rehab; drink fluids, rest, and be ready for work prior to leaving the Rehab area.

15. All officers or crew leaders shall maintain an awareness of the condition of all personnel operating within their span of control and ensure that adequate steps are taken to provide for each member's safety and health.