

# **UNDERWATER SEARCH & RECOVERY TEAM**

STANDARD NO(S): NYSLEAP: 43.6

DATE: October 4, 2011  
REVIEWED: 12/20/2019

REFER TO: Edward Swart

- I. OBJECTIVE: To establish policy and procedures for the participation in and operation of the Seneca County Sheriff's Office Underwater Search and Recovery Team.
- II. POLICY: Due to the number of lakes, canals and waterways located within Seneca County, the Office of Sheriff maintains a special operations component known as the Underwater Search and Recovery Team (USRT). The purpose of this specialized component are to recover the bodies of submerged victims and to search and recover articles which may be considered to be contraband, evidence or hazards to navigation.
- III. DETAILS:
  - A. The USRT is under the general command of the Sheriff, assisted by the Undersheriff and Chief Deputy, but is operationally under the command of the Dive Coordinator.
  - B. The USRT will be comprised of -
    1. Dive Coordinator
    2. Dive Master/Assistant Team Leader
    3. Appropriate number of divers as authorized by the Sheriff, drawn from the Sheriff's Office and Seneca County Fire Service
    4. Appropriate number of surface support personnel necessary for the safe execution of dive operations.
    5. Navigation Officers – when the dive operation requires the participation of members assigned to navigation duties. These members and Sheriff's watercraft will be under the operational command of the Dive Coordinator.
  - C. Selection process of USRT members -
    1. Interested member must volunteer/self nominate to Sheriff in writing.
    2. Receive the endorsement from SCSO Division Commander or Fire Chief
    3. Undergo interview with Dive Coordinator and Dive Master.
    4. Successfully complete the Water Skills Test

5. Complete a Recreation Scuba Training Council medical questionnaire.

D. Equipment –

1. USRT equipment will only be used for training and dive operations.
2. SCSO divers will only use SCSO issued equipment or that which has been approved by the Dive Coordinator.
3. All USRT equipment will be kept secure at the Sheriff's Office or in the "dive trailer."
4. All dive team equipment will be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications or as required by law.
5. When dive operations have been concluded for the day all dive team equipment will be properly cleaned and stored.
6. Once the dive operations have fully concluded, all equipment will be thoroughly and properly cleaned and returned to the dive trailer.
7. USRT equipment is owned by Seneca County and will only be used for county sanctioned training and dive operations.

E. Designated person- in-charge –

1. The Dive Coordinator or Team Leader shall be at the dive location and will remain in operational command of all aspects of the diving operation affecting the safety and health of dive team members.
2. The Dive Coordinator and Team Leader will have experience and training in the conduct of assigned diving operations.

F. Training –

1. Each dive team member will have the experience or training necessary to perform the assigned tasks in a safe manner.
2. Each dive team member will have experience and training in the following:
3. The use of tools, equipment and systems relevant to assigned tasks.
4. Techniques of the assigned diving mode, and
5. Diving operations and emergency procedures.
6. All dive team members shall be trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid (American Red Cross standard or equivalent)
7. Dive team members who are exposed to or control the exposure of others to hyperbaric conditions will be trained in diving related physics and physiology.
8. The USRT will train regularly as needed and practical.
9. A training plan will be prepared by the Dive Coordinator or Team Leader for each training session and will be kept on file in accordance with SCSO policy and procedures.

G. Dive Operations –

1. Activation – The USRT will only be activated by the Sheriff, Undersheriff or Chief Deputy. A request for activation may come from any SCSO supervisor through any source.
2. The USRT will conduct search, rescue and recovery operations.
3. Risk/Benefit will be considered in the planning of all dive operations.
4. Prior to the commencement of any dive operations, a written plan will be formulated to cover all aspects of the operation.
5. The Dive Coordinator or Team Leader will have operational command authority to commence or terminate any dive operation.
6. Any ranking command officer from the Sheriff's Office will have the authority/responsibility to terminate dive operations if the safety of those involved in the operation becomes an issue.
7. No dive team member will be authorized to dive or otherwise be exposed to hyperbaric conditions for the duration of any temporary physical impairment or condition which is known to the employer and is likely to affect adversely the safety and health of a dive team member. Divers have the responsibility to report any known issues related to diving to the Dive Coordinator or Team Leader before any dive operation commences and immediately if any issues develop during a dive operation.
8. Standard operational depth limit will be no deeper than 100 feet.
9. Exception to Standard operational depth – In the event that there is a benefit that outweighs the perceivable risks, a dive to depths greater than 100 feet but no greater than 120 feet will be permitted only after a thorough and complete planning session and with approval of the Dive Coordinator and with approval from the Chief Deputy, Undersheriff or Sheriff.
10. Standard operational dives will not involve planned decompression stops.
11. Exception to Standard Operational dives – In the event that there is a benefit that outweighs the perceivable risks, dives involving planned decompression stops will be permitted only after a thorough and complete planning session and with approval of the Dive Coordinator and with approval from the Chief Deputy, Undersheriff or Sheriff.
12. Each dive team member will be assigned tasks in accordance with their expertise or training, except that limited additional tasks may be assigned to a diver undergoing training provided these tasks are performed under the direct supervision of an experienced dive team member.

H. Deployment outside of Seneca County – The USRT will only be deployed outside of Seneca County with the approval of the Sheriff, Undersheriff or Chief Deputy.

I. The Dive Coordinator will prepare an incident report encompassing all aspects of the dive operation upon its conclusion.