




Clayton County Police Department

PROCEDURES

Subject UNDERWATER SEARCH AND RECOVERY TEAM (USRT or DIVE TEAM)		Procedure # D32	
Authorizing Signature 	Effective 10-23-2023	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amended <input type="checkbox"/> Rescinds	Total Pages 4

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Underwater Search and Recovery Team (USRT) is to respond to underwater emergencies or recoveries within Clayton County and to mutual aid requests as per agreements and commitments approved by the Clayton County Police Department (CCPD).

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the CCPD to provide specific guidelines for the use and deployment of the USRT.

III. INTENT

The intent of this procedure is to provide members of the CCPD with basic guidelines for the operation of the USRT. These guidelines should be used as a starting point in USRT operations, and are intended to point the way to safe dive operations. Members should realize that it is impossible for this procedure to cover every situation or incident. A situation may arise which may require the team to "adjust" its normal method of operation. This flexibility should not be a problem if the USRT Commander, Divers, and Line Tenders have fully analyzed the risks and benefits of the operation and determined them to be favorable. The well-being of team members should not be risked.

USRT shall respond to the following types of incidents, which is not all-inclusive:

- A. Drowning (search and recovery operations);
- B. Evidence recovery; and
- C. Any water-related recovery or assistance approved by the Department.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Backup Diver: A diver that is in or near water, fully equipped for immediate response to aid the primary diver. This diver shall be familiar with all of the primary diver's equipment, its location and operation.

Diver's Profile/Log: Documentation recording information about a diver's identification, pre-dive air supply, post-dive air supply, surface interval between repetitive dives, water environmental conditions (i.e., water temperatures, visibility, currents, obstructions and/or hazards, etc.), and surface environmental conditions.

Line Tender: The line tender is responsible for maintaining direct communication (verbally and/or using line signals) with the Primary Diver and/or any other Divers as they submerge to assist the Primary Diver. The Line Tender shall have knowledge of the current submersion time of the diver(s). The Line Tender may be responsible for documenting a Diver's Profile/Log in the absence of the Profiler/Information Recorder.

On-Scene Commander: The On-Scene Commander is designated by the USRT Commander, as needed, and shall directly oversee all functions related to the witness interviews, staging, safety, and deployment of divers into the water. The On-Scene Commander may direct any patrol or investigative personnel to assist with tasks that they deem necessary for the safety of the USRT, or to bring the situation to a successful conclusion.

Police Diver: A diver trained and certified in Dive Accident Rescue Techniques and Underwater Search & Recovery through a recognized dive certifying agency, e.g., Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI), National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI). The dive training and certifications must be recognized by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (GPOSTC) as it pertains to public safety diving.

Primary Diver: The designated diver that is or will be actively searching underwater.

Profiler/Information Recorder (PIR or Scribe): The PIR shall be responsible for keeping a written log/documentation of all events and the Diver's Profile/Log.

Rescue Mode: A situation that would be handled as an emergency in which there is a significant chance that a life could be saved. This mode can last up to one (1) hour, but it can be changed based on the environmental and water conditions.

Search and Recovery Mode: A non-emergency situation in which the divers will respond in accordance with a given plan in order to locate/recover a person, vehicle, or item that is the subject of an investigation. This mode shall be utilized once the rescue mode has expired, or it is deemed that rescue mode would not be appropriate in the given situation.

USRT (or Dive Team) Commander: The USRT Commander will be responsible for all USRT operations and deciding the risk benefit factor in committing divers to the water. If not personally assuming the responsibility, the USRT Commander shall designate an On-Scene Commander. It shall be the duty of the USRT Commander to keep the appropriate personnel informed of the scene and activities that are taking or have taken place in accordance with the Department's Incident Notification Protocol. The USRT Commander shall have complete authority in all USRT operations. The USRT Commander may direct any patrol or investigative personnel to assist with tasks that they deem necessary for the safety of USRT, or to bring the situation to a successful conclusion.

V. PROCEDURES:

A. Personnel

The minimum number of personnel necessary to make a single dive is four (4). The operations procedure for dives with minimal personnel is as follows:

1. USRT Commander and/or On-Scene Commander;
2. Primary Diver;
3. Back-up Diver; and
4. Primary Line Tender and/or Profiler/Information Recorder.

B. Selection Process

The position of Police Diver requires minimum personal qualifications. These are listed below. The position also requires a two (2) year minimum commitment to the USRT. If the officer is selected for the position, it also requires that the officer successfully complete an approved training course. The process will begin when the candidate submits a *Letter of Interest* in

response to the announcement of an open position. The *Letter of Interest* will then be submitted to the USRT Commander as well as the concerned Division Commander. After the *Letter of Interest* is submitted, the candidate will be scheduled for an Oral Board consisting of the USRT Commander and personnel appointed by the Chief of Police. Upon successful completion of the interview the candidate will then be tested to ensure they meet the minimum personal and physical fitness requirements. These requirements are outlined herein. If the candidate successfully completes said selection criteria, and is appointed to the USRT, the candidate is required to complete a probationary period of one (1) year.

1. The minimum personal qualifications for selection to USRT are as follows:
 - a. Successful completion of the probationary period after hire;
 - b. Must have a minimum of two (2) years of law enforcement experience and one (1) year of continuous, uninterrupted service with the CCPD as a sworn officer; and
 - c. The officer must have no adverse disciplinary action resulting in a suspension of more than three (3) days in duration or in total, within the last twelve (12) months of service, prior to consideration for appointment.
2. The minimum physical fitness requirements for selection by the USRT are as follows:
 - a. Swim four hundred (400) yards non-stop;
 - b. Retrieve a fifteen (15) pound weight from a depth of twelve (12) feet and place it on the side of the pool without assistance or physical support;
 - c. Tread water for fifteen (15) minutes without the help of any flotation device;
 - d. Swim fifty (50) feet underwater without breaking the surface; and
 - e. Successful completion of a Basic SCUBA skill evaluation.

C. Training

Members of the Department should be aware that water-related emergencies are significantly more dangerous than other emergencies. The likelihood of serious injury or death from responding to a waterborne incident is significant. **The use of scuba increases these risks.** For this reason, the team members have been trained to standards in accordance with those set forth by the Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI) and National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI).

Members should make every effort to improve their skills and maintain good physical condition. **Remember, training does not end when the certification is received.** Every member is responsible for maintaining a level of knowledge and training to enable an informed appraisal of the calculated risks involved in water recovery incidents. Members have shown that they are caring professionals. The high standards of the USRT must be maintained and improved upon to minimize the risk to Department personnel and to increase the survival chances of the divers.

Training consists of one (1) eight (8) hour training day per month and an additional forty (40) hours annually.

1. Training will address the operational needs of the USRT.
2. Training courses will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines established by the PADI or NAUI.
3. Training courses shall cover all aspects of the USRT operations and may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Use of diving equipment;
 - b. Training in emergency diving procedures;
 - c. Equipment maintenance/repair;

- d. Boat launching and operation;
- e. Recovery of drowning/drowned victims;
- f. Search patterns;
- g. Vehicle/evidence recoveries;
- h. Dive Rescue procedures/first aid;
- i. Rope handling;
- j. Underwater communication equipment; and
- k. Additional training subjects as needed.

4. Annual training will be held at a time designated and scheduled by the USRT Commander.
5. All officers will demonstrate and maintain proficiency in required skills.
6. The USRT Commander shall be responsible for keeping copies of all records and certifications on each member of the USRT. The records will be kept in a central file located in the Special Response room at CCPD Headquarters.

D. Call Outs

1. Call outs will be part of all Divers' responsibilities. Divers will be subject to call-out on a twenty-four (24) hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five (365) days a year basis.
2. Dispatch will notify the USRT Commander, or designee, when a request is made for USRT assistance.
3. The USRT Commander, or designee, will then contact USRT members and determine the appropriate response.
4. The Chief of Police, or authorized designee, must approve all requests for mutual aid to other agencies and special requests. When deploying for mutual aid requests, departmental policies, procedures, and guidelines for the use of the USRT, and not those of any outside agency, will be followed by USRT members.
5. All call outs will be properly documented, stored and maintained in a central file located in the Special Response room at CCPD Headquarters. These records shall include, but are not limited to:
 - a. *Incident Report*, with departmental case number, detailing the incident;
 - b. *Public Safety Dive Log* which shall include the name of all Divers on the scene or site, as well as detailed information about the dive (i.e., site, time, purpose, etc.);
 - c. *Scene Sketch* which may be substituted with photos or a computer-generated printout of scene; and
 - d. Any other applicable photographs or documents from the scene.

E. General Rules of the USRT

1. At all times, when **ANY** member of the USRT does not feel comfortable about the current mission, they may terminate from the mission or the USRT without recourse. The final decision for a USRT member to dive rests on the concerned diver.
2. At all times a risk/benefit factor will be assessed on any training and/or real mission.
3. In the event that **ANY** member of USRT notices a situation (personal or environmental) that could adversely affect a Diver's ability to complete the mission, that member shall bring the information to the USRT Commander, or designee, who reserves the right to terminate the Diver from the mission without recourse.

VI. CANCELLATION

This procedure amends and supersedes the following standard operating procedure: *D32: Underwater Search & Recovery Team (USRT or Dive Team)*, dated February 11, 2020.