



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

Hierarchy of risk (Rescue formula)



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



Contents

Control measure - Hierarchy of risk (Rescue formula) 3



Control measure - Hierarchy of risk (Rescue formula)

Control measure knowledge

Rescues from water are often high risk activities and where possible entering the water should be avoided. Incident commanders should consider the hierarchy of rescue options available to them and select the most appropriate tactic for any rescue attempt:

- **Talk/Shout:** Casualties are sometimes able to self-extricate or reach a position of relative safety to allow a rescue to be completed. Early contact should always be made with any casualty this may calm the casualty and allow incident commanders to gather information including whether the casualty is trapped, conscious or able to self-extricate.
- **Reach:** Using an object to make physical contact with the casualty. This may be a tool designed specifically for the purpose or a found object. When selecting a reach tool, personnel should consider that a casualty's motor skills and grip strength may be affected by their immersion in water. Where possible buoyant objects should be used, this will aid a casualty if they cannot be recovered immediately. Personnel should avoid making direct physical contact with a casualty where possible, to prevent their own safety being compromised.
- **Throw:** Using specially designed rescue tools or buoyant objects to help retrieve or stabilise a casualty.
- **Row:** Committing trained personnel on to the water in rescue boats, sleds or similar craft.
- **Go:** Committing trained personnel into the water to perform a rescue by wading, swimming or other techniques. The need to retrieve committed personnel should be considered and appropriate safety systems implemented.
- **Don't go:** A dynamic risk assessment may identify that it is not possible to perform a rescue until additional control measures are identified.
- **Helicopter:** Use air support to assist search and rescue activities. See control measure [Specialist resource: Helicopter.](#)

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Identify an appropriate response to incidents involving water



Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Safely approach the casualty and maintain a safe environment for casualties, responders and the public
- Establish and maintain contact with the casualty
- Consider the need for immediate rescue or a means of securing the casualty
- Adopt a Talk – reach – throw – row – go – don't go – helicopter hierarchy approach to rescue plan