
	TRAVIS COUNTY ESD #5 MANCHACA FIRE RESCUE Department Policy	B107
	Authorized by:  Fire Chief Chris Barron	Effective: 2/24/2021 Rescinds: Reference: Application: Operations Members
Firefighter Rehab		

I. Purpose

This policy is intended to provide guidance in providing effective and appropriate firefighter rehabilitation. Additionally, it describes the organization of the firefighter rehabilitation area at an event or incident.

II. Background

Firefighters often work in strenuous environments, under adverse conditions while wearing PPE that adds to stressors. At these events, firefighter rehabilitation must be provided to allow a rest and recovery period. Doing so increases the safety and health of our responders as well as maintain the workforce they can continue incident operations without injury.

III. Policy

A. Definitions.

1. **Active cooling.** The process of using external methods or devices (hand/forearm submersion, misting fans, cool towels, etc.) to reduce elevated core body temperature.
2. **Passive cooling.** The process of using natural evaporative cooling (sweating, doffing PPE, moving to a cooler environment) to reduce elevated core body temperature.
3. **Energy drink.** A type of beverage containing stimulant drugs (caffeine or other ingredients such as taurine, ginseng, and guarana) that is marketed as providing mental or physical stimulation.
4. **Sports drink.** A fluid replacement beverage that is between 4% and 8% carbohydrate and contains between .5g and .7g of sodium per liter.

B. **Preventive measures.** Personnel should be aware of and exercise preventive measures to avoid heat stress injuries. Many of these measures can be found in Policy B106: Heat Stress Management. Following these measures will increase the effectiveness of rehab operations.

C. **Establishment of rehab.** Rehab may be informal or formal based on incident needs.

1. **Informal rehab.** At smaller incidents or shorter-duration tactical events, crews may be expected to rehab informally. This will typically consist of utilizing rehab supplies on their apparatus to rehydrate and cool off as they are rotated out of work cycles or the incident has been declared under control.
2. **Formal rehab.** At larger scale incidents, Command may elect to formally declare a rehab group and designate a rehab manager. Typically, onscene resources will be used to initially establish the rehab area. Rehab supplies will typically be gathered from onscene resources.

D. Responsibilities.

1. **Command.** The Incident Commander is responsible for establishing a formal rehab area when incident duration and scene conditions warrant. The IC and Rehab Manager shall determine the resources needed for the rehab area and ensure they are available.
2. **Company Officer.** The company officer shall ensure that their crewmembers are properly hydrated and monitor them for heat-related illness. The company officer should assess their members every 45 minutes or less depending on conditions and determine their need for rehab.
3. **Rehab Manager.** The rehab manager shall establish and communicate the location of the rehab area. The rehab manager shall anticipate and make requests for supplies as needed through the incident's command structure. They shall document and track crews that enter the rehab area and their status upon leaving rehab (reassigned, released from scene, referred to EMS, etc.).
4. **Individuals.** Individual members shall maintain their hydration, maintain awareness of the health and safety of their crewmates, advise their officer when they are in need of rehab, and fully comply and participate in the rehabilitation process.

- E. **Accountability.** Crews shall maintain accountability through the rehab process. Crews assigned to a formal rehab area shall report directly to the rehab manager as a crew and remain in rehab until released or reassigned by the rehab manager.

IV. Procedure

A. Establishing rehab area.

1. **Site location.** The rehab area should be far enough from the effects of the incident that members can safely remove their PPE and be afforded physical and mental rest.
2. **Designation.** When only one rehab area is utilized, it will typically be referred to as "Rehab". If the size or arrangement of the incident is such that more than one rehab area is needed, each rehab area will be named with its geographic location (Alpha Rehab, Charlie Rehab, etc.).

3. **Space layout.** The site shall have space to allow members to remove and leave their PPE before entering the actual rehab area. Care should be taken to avoid cross contamination of the rehab area with contaminated PPE. There should be enough rehab space to accommodate multiple crews at larger incidents.
4. **Environment protection.** The rehab area shall provide protection from the prevailing environmental conditions.
 - a. **Shelter.** The rehab area shall be free of vehicle exhaust and provide shade or air conditioned space in hot environments and a dry space shielded from wind in cold environments. The area shall have a space for crews to sit.
5. **Medical.** Accommodations shall be made for having medical monitoring and treatment, including access to medical transport.

B. Rehab cycle.

1. **Work cycle.** It is recommended that crews receive at least 10 minutes of informal rehab after the use of one SCBA cylinder or 20 minutes of intense work without SCBA. After the use of two SCBA cylinders or 40 minutes of intense work without SCBA, crewmembers shall undergo formal rehab. This rest period should be a minimum of 20 minutes. However, these timelines may be adjusted based on environmental conditions.
2. **Critical incident.** If any members of a crew are seriously injured or killed during an incident, all members of the crew shall be removed from emergency responsibilities at the incident as soon as possible.
3. **Clean space.** The rehab area is considered a clean space. Contaminated PPE should be removed before entering the rehab area's rest and recovery area. A clean water supply with soap or disposable wipes will be made available to crews entering rehab. Crews shall clean their hands, faces, and necks when entering rehab.
4. **Rehab efforts.** The following shall be provided in the rehab area:
 - a. **Relief from environmental conditions.**
 - b. **Rest and recovery.** While work cycle/rehab times may vary with conditions, a rest and recovery cycle should not be less than 10 minutes.
 - c. **Active and/or passive cooling (or warming) as needed for conditions.** PPE should be removed to allow for evaporative cooling. Active cooling should also be available with attention to cooling the head, neck, forearms/wrists, and groin in an effort to reduce core temperature. Warming efforts focus on removing wet clothing, covering with blankets and providing shelter.

- d. **Rehydration.** Members entering rehab shall consume fluids regardless of thirst. Hydration should continue while in rehab and they should be encouraged to continue hydration efforts after the incident.
- e. **Calorie and electrolyte replacement as appropriate.** For a properly conditioned firefighter, electrolyte replacement is typically not necessary until after an hour of exertion. Sports drinks should be considered in addition to regular hydration for these conditions. Energy drinks should not be used. For longer duration events, arrangements to provide food at the incident should be considered.
- f. **Medical monitoring.** Members shall not return to operations if they do not feel adequately rested. Medical monitor personnel may restrict a member from returning to operations for evidence of medical, psychological, or emotional distress or is otherwise unable to perform their duties. All members entering rehab should have the following vitals assessed:
 - 1) Temperature
 - 2) Heart rate
 - 3) Respirations
 - 4) Blood pressure
 - 5) Pulse oximetry
- g. **Member accountability.** Crews should maintain their integrity when reporting to, staying in, and being released from rehab. The rehab manager will document and track all crews that pass through the rehab area and document their release.
- h. **Release.** As crews complete rehab and are determined to be ready for reassignment, the Rehab Manager will advise Command or the Operations Section Chief that crews are available for reassignment. As crews are given new assignments or are released from the incident, the Rehab Manager shall inform the crew of the assignment, who to report to (if applicable), and log their exit from the rehab area.

C. **Additional rehab resources.** At smaller incidents, crews will typically rehab together using the resources carried on their apparatus. At larger incidents, a formal rehab area may be established. A crew may be assigned to staff and operate the rehab area or other resources may be called on to establish or assist fire crews in the management of the rehab area.

- 1. **MFR Auxiliary.** The MFR Auxiliary has been trained on the use of SUP501 and how to operate a rehab area. They may be activated by the IC using the Active 911 application.
- 2. **AFD Smokebuster.** On days with a heat index above 103°F, AFD may have their Smokebuster unit staffed as a rehab resource. An incident commander can request its response when staffed.
- 3. **EMS Resources.** At many major alarms, an EMS resource is dispatched. They may be utilized in the rehab area. However, consideration should be given to requesting an additional EMS unit so

that one is available for patient transport without abandoning the rehab area. Additionally, the EMS Ambus may be requested to provide a climate controlled space for responders.

4. **Capital Metro.** Capital Metro can also be requested to provide a bus for a rehab space. The request can be made through Dispatch. Availability will be determined by Capital Metro management.