FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-3

ISSUE: WATER AND ICE RESCUE

Where fire departments respond to calls for water or ice rescues, employers should:

- Identify the emergency situations which may reasonably be expected to occur in that fire department's response area;

- Train and equip firefighters, so that they can respond to those emergencies quickly, safely and effectively;

- Select, acquire, and maintain the appropriate rescue equipment required to safely perform the operations that may be expected.

Minimum precautions should include:

- All rescuers who enter the water are to maintain controlled contact with the shore/boat (i.e. safety line, hand contact). It should be noted that some rescue situations, such as, but not limited to, certain swift water situations may preclude rescuers from safely being connected to a rope. In these situations, appropriate safety measures should be taken to ensure the safety of rescue personnel. Those fire departments that may need to perform rescues in swift water should ensure that specific training is provided that addresses the unique hazards of swift water rescue;

- Rescue personnel who may be within close proximity to water where there is an exposure to the hazard of falling into the water, should wear an approved personal flotation device;

- Rescue personnel proceeding onto ice should wear an approved personal flotation device and clothing to reduce the effects of hypothermia (Note: where immersion suits are used as personal flotation devices, the requirements in the notation below apply);

- Direct rescuers on the ice should be secured by rescue equipment, appropriate in the circumstances, to ensure the worker's rescue from the water/ice; and

- When using boats, ensure that the boat has the appropriate safety equipment and that the operator is competent to operate the vessel in the conditions encountered.

Note: **A life jacket or personal flotation device stamped or labelled and approved by Transport Canada or the Canadian Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, meet with the intent of this Guidance Note.**