

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-12

ISSUE: REHABILITATION DURING EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Fire departments should develop SOPs/OGs that provide for rehabilitation within the scope of resources available to them. Rehabilitation is required whenever firefighters are exposed to extremes of temperature or work activity.

Typical rehabilitation considerations are (but are not limited to):

- a) Moving fatigued and unassigned personnel away from the hazardous area of the incident before drinking replacement fluids or providing food. Basic hand washing for the purpose of decontamination should be conducted before eating and drinking. Drinks containing caffeine are not recommended.
- b) Ensuring that personnel are provided heated shelter in extreme cold and removed from direct sunlight in high heat.
- c) All personnel are encouraged to re-hydrate throughout the incident. The rule of thumb is approximately 8-13 ounces of replacement fluids during rehab. Regardless of environmental conditions, 500 millilitres (16 ounces) of replacement fluids should be consumed during the final rehabilitation period.
- d) Active cooling may be accomplished through misting or through forearm immersion in cool water when ambient outdoor temperature is above 25 degrees Celsius. Fire departments should investigate the best method for their department.
- e) Following the first rehab session, personnel returning to work need an additional cooling session following each subsequent cylinder of air. For extended work periods, rotation between lighter and heavier work is strongly recommended.
- f) Where available, EMS personnel should provide medical monitoring, however, heart rate should not be the sole indicator for the extent of heat strain.

Note: Elevated or irregular heart rate may be an indication of cardiovascular stress.

References:

GN #3-3 Heat and Cold Stress

Appendix D (of this manual) – “Heat Stress”, Ministry of Labour Health and Safety Guideline