



## IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW SWIFTWATER STANDARDS SEARCH AND RESCUE-NEW INITIATIVES FUND PROJECT FINAL REPORT

With funding from the Search and Rescue New Initiatives Fund (NIF), and in cooperation with Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) through the Search and Rescue Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Swiftwater Taskforce, BCSARA provided equipment and training to assist Swiftwater Team members meet the new Swiftwater Rescue standards adopted in B.C.

The Implementation of New Swiftwater Standards project was approved in March 2014, originally with a 2 year term it was extended to 3 years to allow additional time for Swiftwater Team members to access training courses. The original budget was \$591,204 plus \$131,250 in-kind for a total of \$722,424; additional funding in 2015 for equipment and then in 2017 for a new survival system increased the total NIF funding to \$669,072.26. The actual in-kind value (at the \$25.00 per hour NIF rate) was \$222,800.

Activities within the project included:

1. **Taskforce meeting:** A meeting was held in Richmond of the Swiftwater Taskforce, training providers, and other stakeholders to follow up on previous discussions and determine the basis for the new standards. The outcome was consensus to use NFPA 1670 and 1600 as the basis while recognizing the need for additional specifics to align with the GSAR model in B.C. The Justice Institute of British Columbia was engaged to draft a revision to the Provincial Operating Guideline (POG) on Swiftwater, which forms part of the SAR Safety Program.
2. **Provincial Workshop:** In October 2014 a workshop was held in Chilliwack with representatives from 33 Swiftwater Rescue Teams, agencies, and the BCSARA Board to discuss the draft revised Swiftwater POG. The input received during the workshop resulted in a number of further revisions prior to the standards being distributed further for final review.
  - Number of hours contributed by volunteers for travel and attendance: 1,456
  - Value of volunteers hours at the NIF in-kind hourly rate of \$25: \$36,400.00
  - NIF contribution for travel, accommodation and meals: \$39,770.87

3. **Equipment replacement:** Teams were requested to submit a list of Swiftwater Rescue equipment which required replacing/upgrading, the following is a recap of purchases and funding:
  - Number of Swiftwater Teams receiving funding for equipment: 44
  - Number of Helmets replaced: 54
  - Number of rescue PFDs replaced: 188
  - Number of cutting devices (backup now required): 269
  - Other Swiftwater rescue gear (Personal Protective Equipment related): 670
  - NIF contribution for equipment replacement: \$147,317.04 (includes \$21,000 of additional funds approved in February 2015)
  
4. **Swiftwater Rescue Team Leader course:** the original project included the development of a team leader course specific to Swiftwater Rescue. Input received during the provincial workshop and in further discussion the decision was made to develop a course which would provide leadership skills for Team Leaders regardless of the technical rescue discipline to supplement technical competencies achieved from other courses. The existing Public Service Lifeline Leadership course provided by the JIBC was chosen as the basis, JIBC personnel in consultation with Subject Matter Experts developed additional Rescue Team Leader materials to supplement the course. Courses are now being offered to the SAR Volunteers through funding from BCSARA.
  - Funding from SAR-NIF project for Leadership course development: \$35,000
  
5. **Swiftwater Awareness Training:** the new standards requires all GSAR Volunteers in the province to be trained at a minimum of the awareness level, with the intent of providing awareness of the hazard of swiftwater which can be encountered anywhere in the province. As EMBC already offers free access to GSAR Volunteers and other first responders to an on-line Swiftwater/Flood Awareness course through Rescue Canada funds were used to add information on the new standards to the frontend of the course and update the remaining course.
  - Funding from SAR-NIF for revising the on-line awareness course: \$14,700
  
6. **Operations and Technician Training:** The training portion of the project ran from April 2015 through September 2016, Swiftwater Teams identified members requiring recertification and with approval arranged for their participation in courses which were approved under the new standards. The following is a recap of participation and funding:
  - Number of Swiftwater Team members trained: 471
  - Number of hours contributed by Team Members in travel and courses: 6,021
  - Value of Volunteers contribution at SAR-NIF rate of \$25 per hour: \$150,525
  - Funding from SAR-NIF for course costs: \$245,091
  - Funding from SAR-NIF for travel, meals, and accommodation for participants: \$27,982
  
7. **Rope system testing in the Swiftwater environment:** With approval from the National Search and Rescue Secretariat at the end of fiscal 2016 Basecamp Innovations Ltd was contracted to conduct testing on ropes and rope systems utilized in Swiftwater Rescue. Basecamp had recently completed testing of Rope Rescue systems, which provided added value. The final report from the testing is available.
  - Funding for testing of rope systems in the Swiftwater environment: \$25,000

8. **Rapid Survival System (RSS):** After the death of Sheilah Sweatman in 2011 North Water and a group of Search and Rescue Swiftwater professionals decided to design, prototype and develop a self rescue aid that provides significant additional emergency floatation to a swimmer in a swift water environment. The concept is a product that produces floatation many times greater than what a personal floatation device (PFD) alone can provide.

The National Search and Rescue Secretariat approved \$24,000 towards having the first run of RSS units being produced, and then a further \$44,000 in additional funding allowing a total of 80 units with additional recharge canisters to be provided for Swiftwater Rescue Teams testing.

- Funding for RSS units: \$68,000

**Summary:** The Implementation of New Swiftwater Standards project provided a critical impetus to complete the revised standard, and to allow full implementation across the 44 of the 80 GSAR Groups with Swiftwater Rescue Teams.

The approach taken in the standards of training competencies and capabilities (requirements for GSAR Groups to be recognized/approved to conduct specific activities) is now becoming the standard for other technical disciplines. As well, the Public Safety Lifeline Leadership course with the additional component is influencing other technical rescue training, allowing focus on technical aspects to be supplemented with the leadership course for those becoming Team leaders.

Report drafted by:  
Jim McAllister, Project Manager