



**Williamson County
Emergency Management
Agency Underwater
Operations Unit
Standard Operating Procedures**

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1. SECTION I – Introduction

The Williamson County Emergency Management Agency Underwater Operations Unit (UOU) composed of local volunteer divers helps city, county, state, and federal government agencies in the underwater aspect of law enforcement, body recovery, and inspections of underwater structures. The main goal of UOU is to help all of these agencies so they may better serve their citizens.

Crimes have gone undetected or unresolved because the instruments and/or rewards of the crime were deposited underwater. Because this agency provides underwater search and recovery services, evidence may be recovered which can be used to connect suspects to their crimes.

The certified divers in this unit will be thoroughly trained in underwater search and recovery, underwater crime scene investigation, and have an overall knowledge of preserving the crime scene.

It is essential that these underwater search and recovery standard operating procedures (SOP) be available to cooperating agencies for the purpose of describing relevant guidelines and operational procedures.

2. SECTION II – Objective of Manual

The primary objective of the UOU SOP is to provide relevant guidelines to Williamson County Underwater Operations Unit personnel regarding selection, training and activation of the UOU, and to team members in carrying out search and recovery missions.

3. SECTION III – Mission of UOU

UOU may be called upon to perform search and recovery missions anywhere within Williamson County and neighboring counties upon a mutual aid request, as directed by the Williamson County EMA Coordinator, or representative, or UAU coordinator.

4. SECTION IV – Certification Policy

UOU may consist of volunteer personnel who are trained certified scuba divers available to respond to diving missions authorized by the Williamson County EMA Coordinator or UOU coordinator.

Non-SCUBA certified members will be limited to surface support positions.

5. SECTION V – UOU Organization

5.1 UOU Board of Directors

The UOU board shall consist of four (4) officers, and one (1), Coordinator elected by the active UOU membership. The officers shall be the Assistant Coordinator, Safety and Training Officer, Secretary/Treasurer, & Medical Officer. UOU Coordinator will serve as administrative advisor to the UOU board and may vote in the case of a tie during UOU election of officers. Review of attendance, participation and performance of the UOU board shall occur annually.

5.2 The UOU Board shall assemble quarterly to:

- 1) Identify training and budgetary needs.
- 2) Structure monthly training sessions.
- 3) Review UOU missions and reports.
- 4) Review applicants for UOU member status.
- 5) Review member performance, attendance of meetings, and dive team related activities for further training considerations and advancements within the UOU.

UOU Officers:

- Coordinator-----
- Assistant Coordinator-----
- Medical Officer-----
- Safety / Training Officer-----
- Secretary / Treasurer-----

Present UOU Officers:

Attendance of meetings and participation in training and dive team activities are important responsibilities of the officers. The officers will be required to attend at least 80 percent of all meetings and diving activities in order to review the status of the unit and the actions needed for improvement.

5.3 The UOU Coordinator shall:

- 1) Be responsible for approving operations requests and authorizing the expenditure of necessary manpower, supplies and equipment.
- 2) Prepare and submit an annual report outlining UOU activities, including recommendations to the EMA Coordinator.
- 3) Serve as administrative advisor on the UOU board.
- 4) Prepare recommendations and act as liaison to the EMA Coordinator on budgetary issues.
- 5) Schedule monthly training sessions.
- 6) Schedule quarterly UOU board meetings.

5.4 The UOU Assistant Coordinator shall:

- 1) Assist in the performance of the duties of the UOU Coordinator and assume the responsibility of UOU Coordinator in the Coordinator's absence.

- 5.5 The UOU Safety/Training Officer shall:**
- 1) Assure the highest level of safety during training exercises and/or incidents involving team members.
 - 2) Conduct monthly presentations of diving safety problems and prevention.
 - 3) Define training needs and present recommendations to fellow officers for their consideration. Accepted recommendations will then be presented to team members at regular meetings.
 - 4) Assure safety of new divers, including review of logbook and C-card.
- 5.6 The UOU Medical Officer shall:**
- 1) Maintain individual medical files of members, i.e. allergies, blood type, next-of-kin, certification level. This information will be available at the dive site in case of emergency.
 - 2) Information on the subjects of diving maladies, causes, symptoms, and treatment will be available for hospital use.
 - 3) Design and keep current a medical evacuation plan to the nearest medical facility.
 - 4) Maintain basic first aid equipment, supplies and oxygen.
 - 5) Maintain an adequate knowledge of the physics and physiological effects of diving.
- 5.7 The UOU Secretary/ Treasurer shall:**
- 1) Maintain a list of UOU members.
 - 2) Maintain records and files pertaining to UOU.
 - 3) Maintain an inventory of dive team equipment and supplies.
 - 4) Record and prepare the minutes for the membership.
 - 5) Maintain financial records of the UOU.
 - 6) Give monthly financial reports to the UOU membership.
- 5.8 Team Members**
- All team members have the following responsibilities:
- 1) Maintain a logbook of diving and or UOU related activities.
 - 2) Maintain personal and UOU diving equipment in the proper and recommended manner to ensure safety.
 - 3) Attend meetings, activities and scheduled training dives.
 - 4) Members must attend at least 50 percent of the meetings to remain on active status. Further team training, certificate upgrades and advancements within the UOU will be based on quarterly attendance and participation review of dive team related activities.

Surface Support: All surface support members have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Assist in all operations to complete the mission of UOU.
- 2) Duties may include, but are not limited to, line tending, note taking, mapping, assisting with equipment, and helping with in water data collection excluding the use of scuba.

5.9 Dive Operation Coordinator (DOC)

The Dive Operation Coordinator (DOC) at the scene of a diving operation will have the authority and responsibility for the execution of the mission assigned by the UOU Coordinator. The position of DOC will be assigned to a UOU member who possesses technical knowledge of the diving environment. Because the duties of the DOC will be assigned to a UOU diver at the scene it is important that each UOU diver become familiar with DOC procedures.

These include:

- 1) Decision to start and terminate diving operations with adherence to safety procedures.
- 2) Responsibility to ensure divers conform, without deviation, to no decompression tables with regard to depth and time limitations underwater.
- 3) Responsibility to ensure proper handling of physical evidence associated with underwater investigations and security dive scenes.
 - 3.1) Traffic/crowd control and dive site security will be the responsibility of local, state or federal law enforcement agencies.
 - 3.2) Disposition of recovered physical evidence will be directed by the responsible law enforcement officer in charge.
 - 3.3) Public and media access to the dive site area shall be controlled.
 - 3.4) Communications between responding groups will be maintained using cell phone or via HAM Radio.
On-site UOU to UOU communications can be utilized by FRS radios. Channels are determined at initial briefing.
 - 3.5) Media briefing locations shall be identified and separate from crowd assembly area.
- 4) Responsibility to closely coordinate all activities with the agency in charge of the investigation or incident.
- 5) The responsibilities to complete the diving report and submit it to the UOU Coordinator.
- 6) Keep the Coordinator apprised of the status and the progress of the diving operation.
- 7) Complete other appropriate reports as necessary directed by the UOU Coordinator.
- 8) The DOC will schedule the Incident Debriefing and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

6. SECTION VI – Selection of Divers

- 1) Persons interested in becoming part of the Williamson County EMA UOU will be required to visit at least one regular meeting prior to participating in any water activities. The applicant will be briefed on the purpose and operation of UOU.
- 2) The applicant will be required to pass a criminal background check, and complete two paper applications. **EMA membership app., and UOU app.**
- 3) The applicant will be required to present his or her logbook and Certification card for verification of diving experience. Certificates received from an accredited certifying agency or the military will be required.
The following agencies may be recognized as credible certifying agencies:
 - American Canadian Underwater Certification (ACUC)
 - Association of Commercial Diving Educators (ACDE)
 - British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC)
 - Dive Rescue International (DRI)
 - International Diving Educators Association (IDEA)
 - Lifeguard Systems Inc.
 - National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI)
 - Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI)
 - Professional Diving Educators Association (PDEA)
 - Professional Diving Instructors Corporation (PDIC)
 - Scuba Schools International (SSI)
 - Young Men’s Christian Association SCUBA (YMCA)
 - Military SCUBA Training.
- 4) A checkout dive with a team dive master, or team Safety/Training Officer is required prior to any UOU underwater training. One regular member may act as the safety diver. The checkout dive will include demonstration of basic scuba skills and knowledge of equipment.
- 5) Upon acceptance, all applicants will be enrolled as volunteers.
- 6) New members will be required to attend at least **80 percent** of monthly meetings for the **first six months**.
- 7) A physical examination by a physician may be required. The doctor must approve fitness for diving.
- 8) Additional training will be at the discretion of the UOU Coordinator and the UOU Board.

7. SECTION VII – Search And Recovery Missions

- 1) There shall be no less than three qualified UOU members assigned to any recovery mission in order to satisfy coordination, operation and safety of divers.
- 2) One team member shall be designated as DOC and shall have functional responsibility over the diving mission.
- 3) A hazardous material incident will require decontamination of personnel and equipment. The proper equipment will be required for handling all hazardous materials.
- 4) The UOU Coordinator and the UOU Board will critique each incident in a debriefing.
- 5) An informal debriefing will be mandatory for all members present at a critical incident.
- 6) Inactive UOU members may be used for surface support as designated by the DOC in recovery activities. The safety of both the inactive members and the other participants shall be the primary consideration in determining their suitability to participate.
- 7) All members must be trained for a specific activity before participating in that activity in an actual recovery operation.
- 8) Members not certified in the use of scuba will not be allowed to use it and will be limited to surface support duties.

8. SECTION VIII – Mobilization Procedures

8.1 Authorization

- 1) A request for the services of the Williamson County EMAUOU will be accepted and authorized routinely from the following agencies:
 - 1.1) Williamson County Sheriff's Office.
 - 1.2) Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge
 - 1.3) Illinois State Police - District 13
- 2) Under the auspices of the Williamson County Sheriff's Office Mutual Aid Agreement, Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System, or MABAS, a request from other agencies and/or sources shall be reviewed and investigated by the WCEMA or UOU Coordinator.
- 3) Upon approval to respond for a routine recovery:
 - 3.1) A UOU officer may be dispatched in order to evaluate the dive scene and determine the resources and manpower needed.

4) Based upon the information received or recommendations of the evaluating UOU officer a decision will be made to:

- 4.1) Disapprove the diving mission request, or
- 4.2) Approve the diving mission and authorize the expenditure of the necessary manpower and supplies.
- 4.3) Activate members of UOU via the chain of command. Coordinator, Assistant Coordinator, Safety and Training Officer, Medical Officer, Secretary/Treasurer
- 4.4) Request law enforcement agencies to assist in contacting additional divers through existing telephone networks. In the event of telephone outage contact will be attempted through messenger dispatch aided by the UOU dive roster list.

8.2 Gather Initial Information

The person receiving the request should gather as much of the following information as possible at the time of initial contact:

- 1) The type of incident, i.e., drowning, evidence recovery, etc.
- 2) Location of the incident by county, city, location in reference to nearest highway or other readily discernible landmark current 911 address.
- 3) Date and time of immersion of the victim or item for which the search is initiated, if known.

4) A description of the body of water to be searched, should include:

- Type of water: river, lake, quarry, etc.
- Estimated size of the surface area.
- Accessibility by road.
- Location: GPS latitude/Longitude Coordinates.
- Estimated depth, temperature, and current speed of the water.

5) Location and other pertinent information about any known or possible hazards in the water or surrounding area.

6) Ascertain if any additional equipment will be necessary to complete the operation, i.e., wrecker, boat, lighting, etc.

8.3 UOU Member Mobilization

- 1) Forward a request to the Williamson County EMA Office or the UOU Coordinator via chain of command.
- 2) The EMA Coordinator, UOU Coordinator, or DOC may direct the nearest UOU members to the incident or dive site. All other dive team members will meet at a nearby location and arrive at the incident or dive site together.
- 3) The DOC at the site will be the final authority for determination as to whether or not a dive will be attempted.

9. SECTION IX – Crime Scene Evaluation

Every dive site will be treated as a crime scene and any death treated as a homicide until determined otherwise.

The investigating agency is responsible for contacting a Crime Scene Technician.

Once at the scene, the DOC, or the UOU Coordinator will conduct all interviews of witnesses and initiate a surface ground search at the crime scene for evidence, if a search has not previously been conducted. The surface ground search shall be initiated before the underwater search is begun (recovery mode). If any evidence is found, the area will be marked.

If any item of evidence is located underwater, the UOU diver will mark the area as close to the evidence as possible with a heavy, weighted line and float or buoy. An evaluation will be made of the evidence on an item-by-item basis. The crime scene technician will then be immediately summoned to the crime scene if needed. The evidence may be removed after a marker float is placed indicating the location of the evidence. The scene should be sketched, mapped, and photographed by UOU members and the crime scene technician.

10. SECTION X – Equipment

10.1 Equipment lost or damaged

Equipment lost or damaged during a UOU exercise or mission will be repaired or replaced by WCEMAUOU.

- 1) Equipment lost or damaged must be brought to the attention of the Dive Operations Coordinator (DOC) immediately and steps will be taken to repair or replace that piece of equipment.
- 2) A field report detailing the loss, damage or destruction of the equipment will route through normal channels, ensuring that a copy is presented to the WCEMA Coordinator.
- 3) The field report should include the following:
 - 3.1) Dive operation/incident name, IEMA exercise number.
 - 3.2) Location, date and approximate time.
 - 3.3) Description of the item(s) or equipment.
 - 3.4) Detailed explanation as to how the item(s) were lost, damaged or destroyed and the extent of the damages.
 - 3.5) Estimated cost of repair and/or replacement.

10.2 New Equipment

As the Williamson County UOU has gained knowledge in diving in many different environmental circumstances, the equipment has also evolved with new conditions or tasks. (See Procedures Manual).

11. SECTION XI – Injury Reporting Procedure

11.1 Member Responsibility

A UOU member that is injured or becomes ill as a result of a UOU approved operation shall:

- 1) Immediately report the injury to the DOC, or UOU Coordinator.
- 2) Submit a detailed report.

11.2 UOU Coordinator Responsibility

The UOU Coordinator shall insure that the injury or related illness is reported in accordance with WCEMA policy.