**SWIFTWATER FACT SHEET**

* Floods kill more people than any other natural disaster in the U.S.
* Murky, fast moving water conceals dangerous obstacles
* The need for swiftwater rescues is increasing primarily because people don’t understand the dangers and unknowingly put their lives at risk
* Few situations are more dangerous and challenging for firefighters and first responders

Swiftwater Warnings

* Stay away!
* Two feet of moving water can lift and sweeps vehicles into the flow
* Stay out of moving water that is over your knees

Characteristics of swiftwater

* Powerful – water weighs 62 pounds a cubic foot exerting tremendous force
* Floodwater is a constant, crushing, unyielding pounding
* Water behaves predictable – trained professional rescuers can detect danger areas and safe zones in the water and identify escape routes
* Debris travels as shrapnel in the violent water
* Hypothermia – body temperature can be lost 25 times faster in even 40 degree water, victims and rescuers can become incapacitated in minutes
* Hydraulic (vertical reversal) of water occurs around obstacles creating a churning that can pull swimmers underwater
* Darkness – increases the likelihood a victim will not realize the danger of flood waters until it is too late. The darkness also compounds the risk the rescuers take going into the water.
* Waterway obstacles can trap victims – so called “strainers” are deadly, pinning victims against trees and branches in the water.
* Eroded roadways or dams across a waterway can violently spin a swimmer and pull them under water.