*This model program is intended for general information purposes only. It should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion regarding any specific or factual situation. Always follow your organization’s policies and procedures as presented by your manager or supervisor.*

**ROPE RESCUE POLICY**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this section is to give general guidelines to be used by rescue personnel conducting a rope rescue.

**Policy**

According to federal regulations and standards, the **Name of Fire Department Special Operations Team** shall act and perform as the **city/district** rope rescue response unit and provide:

* Technical expertise
* Assistance
* Appropriate equipment
* Response for the protection of life, property, and the environment
* Support high angle (rope) rescue operations of other agencies

All members of the **Name of Fire Department Special Operations Team** shall receive annual training on their duties in accordance with the latest edition of NFPA 1006, *Standard for Technical Rescuer Professional Qualifications*.

Members of the **Name of Fire Department** not members of the **Name of Fire Department Special Operations Team** shall receive annual training on support activities for rope rescue operations.

All rope rescue equipment will be purchased in accordance with NFPA 1983, *Standard on Life Safety Rope and Equipment for Emergency Services*

A new NFPA Standard, NFPA 2500 *Standards for Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents and Life Safety Rope and Equipment for Emergency Services*is anticipated in 2022. Be prepared to incorporate this new Standard into your policies

All rescue rope shall be selected, cared, stored, and maintained in accordance with NFPA 1858, *Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Life Safety Rope and Equipment for Emergency Services*.

**Definitions**

Rope Rescue - Any rescue which requires rope and related equipment to safely gain access to and remove patients from hazardous geographic areas with limited access, high rise buildings, above or below grade structures, or areas requiring rope systems.

Technical Rope Rescue - Any rescue involving angles of 45 degrees or greater is considered a technical rescue and should require the response of the **Name of Team**.

Non-technical Rope Rescue - In most cases, first responders can conduct rescues involving angles of less than 45 degrees. The **Name of Team** may be called out to assist if the I.C. deems it necessary.

**Rope Rescue Procedures**

The **Officer In Charge** shall evaluate incidents dispatched that may potentially be a rope rescue incident. Any company officer may call for a response for rope rescue if they find themselves in a situation requiring additional resources and expertise. The 1st alarm assignment for a rope rescue inside the city includes the following:

**Insert initial resources to be dispatched**

During the initial stages of an incident in which rope rescue may be necessary, the first arriving companies shall take the following actions and attempt to gather certain critical information:

* Perform scene assessment take immediate control actions,
* Establish Investigation Group, and locate witnesses and persons with specific knowledge that would support the rescue.
* The following information should be gathered and relayed to the Incident Commander:
  + Is this a rescue or body recovery mode? Once determined, the mode should be announced. If recovery mode is confirmed, a non-emergency response for all incoming units is recommended.
  + What is the location(s) of the victim(s)?
  + What is the nature of the victim's situation?
  + How can the victim be reached?
  + How far from the roadway is the victim? Are there other impediments to access?
  + Are there electrical lines or other hazards involved or nearby that could complicate access to the victim or rescue set-up?

If the information gathered suggests that technical rope rescue is the only method possible to reach the victim, complete the following steps:

1. Request Technical Rescue Response
2. Consider the need for special resources (Crane, scissor lift, or professional experts)
3. Initiate the Incident Command System. All technical rescue incidents shall have a structured incident command system with a Rescue Group Supervisor. This system shall be group-based and have the responsibilities listed in this document. In significant multi-strategy incidents, a technical rescue branch may be enacted.
4. Appoint a Safety Officer

The Rescue Group Supervisor shall be responsible for assigning:

1. A crew to perform the rigging function - The rigging crew is responsible for rigging, belaying, rope minding, etc.
2. A crew to perform the victim rescue/recovery function - The rescue/recovery crew is responsible for making entry to locate and remove the victim.
3. A crew to perform support/supply functions - The support/supply crew is responsible for ensuring that both the rigging crew and rescue/recovery crew have all the necessary equipment.

All Rescue Group members will be fully briefed on their assignments after the Rescue Group Supervisor has consulted with the I.C., a rescue plan has been formulated, and before the commencement of rescue operations. If the situation permits, a backup plan should be in place.

**Rescue Operations**

Because of the broad range of variables that exist in technical rescue, there is no hard and fast rule for conducting one. The format used for organizing a successful rescue is referred to as L.A.S.T. (Locate, Access, Stabilize, and Transport). The specific method for accomplishing any of these steps will differ with each rescue. It should be selected based on experience and the multitude of factors unique to the current rescue scene.

Order of Rescue - Because of the inherent risks involved in high-angle rescue, the method of rescue offering the least risk to the rescuer will be used. The following methods are listed in increasing order of risk. Factors influencing the selection include patient condition, rigging time, available workforce and/or equipment, and terrain conditions.

1. Talk victim into self-rescue.
2. Walk or climb with a belay line.
3. Rappel or lower with a belay line.
4. Pick-off with an independent belay.

4a. Raise victim with a belay.

4b Raise victim and rescuer with a belay.

4c Proceed with the stretcher evacuation.

**Safety**

Rescuer safety is paramount in any rescue situation. Before conducting any high-angle operations, a Safety Officer and Rescue Group Supervisor will be identified. The 1st-In Engine will establish a warm zone around the rigging and operations area as soon as possible.

Helmets and rescue gloves shall be worn at all times.

Edge protection shall be used anywhere that a rope comes in contact with a hard surface.

All life safety ropes shall be double anchored before loading.

An independent belay shall be used.

NFPA 1670 *standards on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents*will be followed whenever possible.

Anchors are a mixture of equipment, knot tying, and judgment. All lifelines shall have two independent anchors. Anchors may be natural (trees and boulders), structural (buildings, bridges, and towers), vehicles, or picket pins.