

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-4

ISSUE: **ROPE RESCUE** (Previously known as **HIGH-ANGLE RESCUE**)

Rope rescue is a highly specialized function performed by some fire departments. It involves the use of special equipment and training to complete rescues from areas such as high structures, rough terrain, confined spaces and high rise buildings.

Fire departments that intend on providing technical rescue services, including rope rescue, should ensure that the provision of these disciplines are included in their establishing and regulating by-laws.

There are three distinct levels of rope rescue competency that fire departments should consider when establishing their level of response capability. Those departments who provide rope rescue services should ensure that the required training manuals, instructions and SOPs/OGs are developed in support of the applicable level of service being provided.

Awareness Level - The minimum capability for fire departments that respond to rope rescue incidents:

- Recognizing the need for a rope rescue;
- Identifying resources necessary to conduct rope rescue operations;
- Knowing how to contact the required resources where rope rescue is required;
- Carrying out site control and scene management;
- Recognizing general hazards associated with rope rescue and the procedures necessary to mitigate these hazards;
- Identifying and utilizing PPE assigned for use at a rope rescue incident.

Operations Level - For those fire departments that may be required to identify hazards, use equipment and apply limited techniques while assisting rope rescue technicians in a rope rescue:

- All the competencies contained in the Awareness Level section;
- Using a rope rescue system to move the victim and rescuers from one stable location to another;
- Using both high- and low-angle rescue techniques that include accessing, managing, and packaging the patient in such a way as to keep all personnel safe and reduce the potential for further harm to the patient.

Technician Level - For those fire departments that identify hazards, use equipment and apply advanced techniques to coordinate, perform and supervise rope rescue incidents:

- All the competencies contained in the Operations Level section;
- Accessing a patient using techniques that require rescuers to climb up or down natural or manmade structures, which can expose the climber to a significant fall hazard;
- Using rope rescue systems to move a rescuer and a patient along a horizontal path above an obstacle or projection;
- Performing a high-angle rope rescue of a person suspended from, or stranded on, a structure or landscape feature;
- Understanding and applying the principles of the physics involved in constructing rope rescue systems, including system safety factors, critical angles, and the causes and effects of force multipliers;
- Performing a high-angle rope rescue with a litter using tender(s) to negotiate obstacles, manipulate or position the patient, or provide medical care while being raised and lowered;
- Moving a patient packaged in a litter up and over an edge during a raising operation with a rope system;
- Selecting, constructing, and using a high-line rope system commensurate with the fire department's needs;
- Utilizing a high-line rope system to transport rescuers, equipment, and an occupied litter commensurate with the fire department's needs;
- Utilizing litter attendants within a high-line rope system.

Rope rescue requires regular training to maintain the skills and knowledge necessary to perform these tasks safely and competently. Where it is expected that the frequency of these emergencies will be low, significant attention should be given to ongoing training and practice in order to ensure that the required competencies are maintained.

When developing and operating a rope rescue program, fire departments should:

- Ensure that rope rescue training is only conducted by competent instructors who are properly qualified to instruct in these disciplines on the basis of knowledge, training and experience;
- Ensure that the required equipment and training is provided in accordance with the mandated level of service;
- Ensure that the required equipment and trained personnel are available to provide adequate backup and support for primary rescuers during a rope rescue;
- Ensure that formal processes and protocols are established and maintained for the acquisition, inspection, testing and replacement of all rope rescue equipment;
- Ensure that a formal Life Safety / Rescue Rope program is developed and maintained in accordance with Guidance Note # 1-5 Life Safety Rope and Equipment.