



Jackson Hole Fire/EMS Operations Manual

Developed by: _____

Brian Coe, Battalion Chief

Developed by: _____

James Powell, Captain

Developed by: _____

John Tobey, Firefighter/Paramedic

Approved by: _____

Willy Watsabaugh, Chief

Title: **Rope Rescue
Operations Policy**

Division: 18 – Rescue Ops

Article: 1

Revised: 3/28/2016

Pages: 4

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for conducting rope rescue operations. Because of the infinite number of potential sites and situations that could be encountered, this policy will not define a specific evolution to use, but will give guidelines to follow for conducting safe and effective operations.

SCOPE

JH Fire/EMS will coordinate with Teton County SAR and Grand Teton National Park to provide for Technical Rope Rescue in Teton County. JH Fire/EMS will specialize in over the bank rescue operations from roadways, including low and steep angle rescue. This procedure will apply to all JH Fire/EMS personnel operating in rope rescue training or a rescue incident.

Section I – Definitions

Rope Rescue is defined as any rescue effort that requires rope and related equipment to safely gain access to, and remove patients from, hazardous geographic areas with limited access such as mountains, high rise buildings, above or below grade structures, by means of rope system. Rope Rescue Operations are divided into two general categories: non-technical and technical.

High Angle Rescue are those of 50° slope inclination and steeper and require the dispatch of Teton County SAR to facilitate the technical rescue.

Steep Angle Rescue are considered those from 30° - 50° slope.

Low Angle Rescue are considered those from 15° - 30° slope.

Section II – JH Fire/EMS Rope Rescue Team

- A Rope Rescue Team will be established by JH Fire/EMS, based on response area risk assessment and member interest in rope rescue training.
- Team members will be required to have a minimum of NFPA Rope Rescue Operations, Level I, training.
- Rope Rescue Team members will maintain their NFPA Rope Rescue Operations, Level I, certification through continued training. Continued training may include quarterly, bi-annual or annual training based on instructor and team availability.
- All JH Fire/EMS members will receive, at a minimum, training in rapid patient access, litter attendant and an introduction to rescue systems.

Section III – JH Fire/EMS Rope Rescue Equipment

- Stations that have a minimum of 2-Level I trained personnel will be considered for Rescue Equipment.
- Rope rescue equipment will meet minimum standards and in-service requirements as specified in JH Fire/EMS Rescue Equipment Policy.
- A master equipment list will be utilized by the Rescue Team to insure consistency of rescue equipment at identified stations. The list will also be used for ordering purposes.
- Station budgets will reflect rescue equipment needs.

Section IV – Tactical Considerations

Phase I: Arrive On-Scene. Take and Name Command. Size-Up.

A. First Arrival. If command has not been established, the first Fire/EMS officer or member arriving on scene shall establish Command until relieved by a higher ranking officer, as outlined in the JH Fire/EMS Command Operations policy. If dispatch has requested Teton County SAR, JH Fire/EMS will coordinate the establishment of command with the SAR Board. In the scenario of multi-jurisdictional operations, Unified Command is recommended.

B. Secure Responsible Party or Witness. Command should secure a witness as soon as possible after arriving on scene. This will help in identifying the problem and locating the victim.

C. Locate the Victim. In most cases, Command will have to send a reconnaissance team to the area of the victim to determine the exact location of victim and nature of injuries. Command may wish to designate this as **Recon Group**. **Recon Group** should have EMS equipment to begin to administer first aid to the victim. If the incident requires Teton County SAR due to slope or complexity, Command may decide to wait until Teton County SAR arrives with the proper equipment and personnel to reach the victim.

D. Decide on Rescue or Recovery. The **Recon Group Supervisor** should advise Command whether the operation should be conducted in the rescue or recovery mode. In the rescue mode, personnel assigned to **Recon Group** will be reassigned to **Rescue**

Group and **Recon Group** will be terminated. As additional groups join up with the **Rescue Group**, they shall become part of the **Rescue Group** unless their location or function logically would dictate that they remain a separate group or division with a call sign designated by Command. If the operation is to be conducted in the recovery mode, Command may wish to leave the victim and any related equipment in place for investigative purposes.

E. Assess the Need for Additional Resources. **Recon Group** should provide Command with enough information, or recommend the need for additional resources. Information that will be helpful in determining the need for additional resources would be: number of victims, location and condition of victims, estimated angle of terrain, distance to victim, quantity and type of equipment needed, and estimated time for rescue. If needed, Command should put in an early call for additional resources. Additional crews sent in by Command to assist **Recon Group** should be designated Group 1, Group 2, etc., to aid in the accounting of personnel. If additional resources are not needed after a call has been put in, Command may terminate request.

F. Assess the Hazards. Command may designate a **Safety Officer** to identify all potential hazards to rescuers. **Safety Officer** will be responsible for securing those hazards or making all members aware of those hazards. **Safety Officer** shall also be responsible for assuring that all safety procedures are adhered to.

Phase II: Pre-Rescue Operations

A. Make the General Area Safe. Command or his/her designee should begin to make the general area safe. This may include securing the area and not allowing civilian personnel into the area.

B. Make the Rescue Area Safe. Command or his/her designee should make the immediate rescue area safe. This may include removing all civilian personnel and all non-essential rescue personnel from the area. If it is not possible to secure all the hazards in the immediate rescue area, all personnel operating in that area shall be made aware of those hazards.

C. Pre-Rescue/Recovery. **Rescue Group** will be responsible for gathering all equipment and personnel necessary to operate according to the action plan. **Rescue Group** will assign rescue personnel to conduct the rescue, and support personnel to support the rescuers, during the actual rescue phase.

Phase III: Rescue Operations

A. Risk versus Benefit. Risk Management is critical in all phases of rescue operations. Rescuer safety is the number 1 priority. Safety of victims/patients is the next priority. Lowest-risk methods will be utilized first, while setting up higher-risk methods as next alternatives.

The order of rescue from low risk to high risk would be:

1. Talk the victim into self-rescue. If the victim is not exposed to a life-threatening situation, it may be possible to talk the victim into self-extrication. If the victim is exposed to a life-threatening situation, it may be best to advise the victim to stay in place until a rope rescue can be set up.
2. If the victim is ambulatory and rescuers can reach the victim with a safety line, he/she can walk to safety with the assistance of rescuers.
3. If the victim is injured or unable to assist in their own rescue, he/she should be packaged properly and carried to safety. Details regarding rope rescue systems in Low and High-angle terrain can be found in the JH Fire/EMS Rope Rescue Systems policy.

B. Decide on an Action Plan. With the recommendation from the **Rescue Group Supervisor**, Command will decide on an action plan. The action plan, as well as any alternatives, will be communicated to all rescuers on scene.

C. Rescue Group Supervisor shall ensure the overall safety of the raising/lowering system. **Rescue Group** shall designate the tasks of individual rescuers during the operation.

Phase IV: Termination

- A. **Personnel accountability.**
- B. **Equipment accountability.**
- C. **(If a fatality, Command may consider leaving equipment in place for investigative purposes).**
- D. **Re-stock vehicles.**
- E. **Debriefing.**
- F. **Secure the scene.**
- G. **Return to service.**

Section V – Additional Considerations

- **Heat.** Consider rotation of crews.
- **Cold.** Consider effects of hypothermia on victim and rescuers.
- **Rain/Snow.** Consider the effects of rain or snow on the hazard profile.
- **Time of Day.** Is there sufficient lighting for operations extending into the night?
- **Family.** Consider the effect on family and friends; keep family informed.
- **Media.** Consider news media; assign a PIO.