

311 Rope Rescue Operations

PURPOSE

- The intent of this policy is to provide guidelines for safe and effective rope rescue operations and training for East County Fire & Rescue personnel.

General

- Ropes and rope equipment shall be utilized in accordance with department training, Standard Operating Guidelines and NFPA 1670 and 1983.
- All East County Fire & Rescue response personnel entrusted with the responsibility of operating at the scene of a rope rescue shall have a basic working knowledge and skill set of department rope rescue operations and equipment including: terminology, types of ropes and knots, standard operations and systems, proper use of equipment, equipment limitations, inspection practices and logging of use.

Emergency Response

- An incident involving rope rescue operations will require an initial response of an engine and either Squad 91 or Squad 94 to the scene.
- When operations involve anything more than low angle rescue or incident complexity makes it necessary, the Vancouver Technical Rescue Team will be requested to respond by the Incident Commander.
 - If needed, the MERT team can be requested through dispatch as well.
- Additional engines should also be requested by the Incident Command when extra resources are needed to facilitate on-scene operations.
- Consider law enforcement for traffic control and scene security.
- For victims needing medical attention, request an ALS ambulance.
- For prolonged and large-scale scenes, a chief officer may be requested to respond and assume command of the scene.

Operations

- Incident Command shall be established on all rope rescue situations.
- If not already assigned an Ops channel by dispatch, consider moving all responding units to an assigned Ops frequency.
- Rope rescue equipment and procedures shall be used on any scene where it is deemed necessary by the Incident Commander.
- A competent safety officer will be appointed by the Incident Command, as soon as on-scene resources allow, in compliance with NFPA 1521.
- East County Fire & Rescue first responders will be limited to "low angle" rescue operations where the rescuer and equipment are in contact with the ground and not supported entirely by the rope system.
- In situations where the operations go beyond a low angle rescue, Vancouver's Technical Rescue Team and/or the MERT team will be utilized to facilitate rescue operations.

- In this case, East County Fire & Rescue personnel will serve in a support role and as a command presence. The support role may include ECFR personnel setting up lowering lines, belay lines, haul systems and assisting the TRT or MERT.
- Department approved anchors will be applied and checked before personnel rappel over any edge.
- All lowering and haul lines will be inspected by someone other than the person that rigged that line.
- Only steel carabineers and ½", low stretch kernmantle rope will be used for life safety operations.
- Braid on braid and/or less than ½" diameter rope will be used only as utility rope for hoisting tools and securing objects not involved in life safety applications.
- Steel carabineers will be in the locked position and loaded in the long axis, not side loaded.
- All knots used will be district approved and accompanied by a secure safety knot, whenever applicable.

Training

- In order to maintain proficiency, East County Fire & Rescue response personnel should train with rope rescue equipment on a quarterly basis.
- All ECFR response personnel, at a minimum, shall be trained to the Awareness level set forth in NFPA 1670.
- ECFR line staff should be trained to an Operations level set forth in NFPA 1670.
- When possible, training rope and equipment should be utilized during training, rather than first line emergency equipment.
 - When emergency equipment must be used for training, appropriate inspection and documentation must be completed prior to the equipment being returned in service.

Inspection and Cleaning

- Inspection of rope rescue equipment shall be performed after each use, including training equipment, according to manufacturer's recommendations.
 - If needed, cleaning of the equipment will also be completed in compliance using manufacturer's recommendations.
- Return rope back in appropriate bags and apparatus by stuffing, not coiling, the rope and putting equipment in its proper place.
- When possible, do not store rope with knots left in.
- If rope or equipment needs to be put out of service for repair or replacement, then red tag the equipment, remove it from service and notify the Rope Program Manager.
 - Attempt to replace the damaged equipment from either the rope cache bags on Squad 91 and 94 or from the rope supply at Station 91.

- To be in compliance with manufacturer recommendations, all rope, webbing and harnesses will be put out of service or destroyed after 10 years of service life.
- "Putting out of service" includes cutting rope and webbing into small sections that would allow for practicing knots but not rope rescue.
- "Destroying" pertains to the discarding of ropes, webbing and harnesses that are not suitable for training or rescue response.
- See "Logging Use" for instructions on completing equipment inspections and cleanings.

Logging Use

- A rope log can be found and used at each station, in a notebook entitled, "Rope Rescue."
- Rope used during training or on an emergency, shall be properly documented following inspection and cleaning.
- Each time a rope is used, the following should be entered into the log such as the date, manner in which the rope was used, comments and the inspector's initials.
- Any East County response personnel can log use and maintenance in the rope log.
- It is the respective Shift Lead's responsibility to make sure the rope log gets properly filled out at the conclusion of the drill or emergency incident.
- The Rope Program Manager's responsibility will be to review the rope log on a monthly basis to check for proper documentation, rope use and equipment maintenance.