

OPERATIONS MANUAL
STANDARD INSTRUCTION 02, SECTION 18
SPECIAL OPERATIONS: COASTAL CLIFF RESCUE PROCEDURES

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to provide operational guidelines for rescue responsibilities within the City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department for all coastal cliff rescues. As is the case with all emergency calls, establishing a clear incident command structure will allow for a more efficient and effective rescue operation. This delineation of roles and responsibilities will create the safest possible scenario for the rescuers and the victim(s).

San Diego Lifeguards have primary responsibility for coastal cliff rescues. Lifeguard staffing provides for a Lifeguard Rescue Response and when staffed, they shall be shown as LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE in CAD. When Lifeguard staffing is not available, CAD shall show the LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE as out of service and Fire Operations shall assume primary responsibility for coastal cliff rescues.

II. SCOPE

This policy shall provide information and procedures for personnel responding to Coastal Cliff Rescue Emergencies. San Diego Fire-Rescue personnel from the Fire Operations or the Lifeguard Services shall adhere to this policy.

III. AUTHORITY

Fire Chief

IV. POLICY

A. TRAINING

Experts from both Fire Operations and Lifeguard Operations will be identified to work collaboratively in a standing Cliff Rescue Working Group on best practices associated with cliff rescues, to include techniques, equipment and training. They will serve as instructors and provide training to all personnel on coastal cliff emergencies, including academies, in-service trainings, and field units in the coastal cliff areas. Annual refresher training in cliff rescue shall include individual skills assessments.

B. COORDINATION OF RESPONSE RESOURCES

1. The Lifeguard Division will be primarily responsible for coastal cliff rescue response and incident command when Lifeguard staffing provides for a Lifeguard Rescue Response. When staffed, the preferred IC shall be a Lifeguard Lieutenant. In situations where Fire personnel are first to arrive at scene, they shall formally assume IC and transfer command to an equal or higher ranking Lifeguard Supervisor.

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2. When Lifeguard staffing does not provide for a Lifeguard Cliff Rescue Response, Fire Operations will be responsible for responding to coastal cliff rescue emergencies. The on-duty Lifeguard Supervisor or designee shall be notified and respond to assist the Fire Operations IC with area familiarization and related support. Lifeguards will switch to the incident command channel. In situations where Lifeguard personnel are first to arrive at scene, they shall formally assume IC and transfer command to an equal or higher ranking Fire Supervisor.
3. The Fire Operations response to coastal cliff rescue will be in accordance to the FCC response matrix.
4. When the Lifeguards have primary responsibility, the Lifeguard Communications Center is responsible for dispatching these emergencies and will monitor radio traffic. Similarly, when Fire Operation's is primary, the Fire Communication Center is responsible for dispatching these emergencies and will monitor radio traffic.
5. For the purposes of ensuring appropriate and clear communication during cliff rescues, Fire-Rescue personnel shall be aware of the following rank equivalencies:
 - a. Lifeguard Chief - Deputy Chief/Shift Commander
 - b. Marine Safety Lieutenant - Battalion Chief
 - c. Lifeguard Sergeant - Fire Captain

C. RISK MANAGEMENT AND RISK ASSESSMENT

1. There are inherent risks associated with all cliff rescues. Proper risk assessment shall be conducted and safety considerations for the victim(s), rescuers and bystanders will be paramount in every incident. Common approaches and safe and effective procedures as outlined in this policy shall be used while performing cliff rescues. Ensuring clear communication between all rescuers and adherence to the ICS model are critical.
2. Risk management requires the Incident Commander and the Operations Section Chief, if one has been designated, to evaluate existing and potential hazards. Additionally, operational decisions shall be made after balancing the potential risks verses the potential benefits (i.e. risk/benefit analysis). Decisions with increased risk would be made only when that risk is justified based on known factors such as patient status, cliff stability, incoming tide, large surf, or other environmental issues that threaten patient or rescuer safety.
3. In general, ground based cliff rescue methods involve lower risk and are preferred over cliff rescues made by a helicopter. There are, however, circumstances in which the use of a helicopter is more practical, efficient, and a preferred approach for rescuers. Questions to be asked when considering the use of a helicopter may include but are not limited to the following:

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- a. Does the victim have serious traumatic injuries or a medical condition requiring an immediate evacuation (i.e. the Golden Hour)?
- b. Is the victim too large to move safely by ground-based methods?
- c. Is the victim in a location that is inaccessible via normal ground-based rescue operations?
- d. Is the victim in a location where extrication will take an inordinate amount of time?

D. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

1. Dispatch

- a. When the LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE is available in CAD and FCC has a caller on the phone reporting a possible cliff rescue (with or without injuries) on or near the cliffs, they shall include Lifeguard Dispatch on a conference call and/or transfer call so that lifeguard dispatchers can speak directly to the reporting party.
- b. When the LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE is out of service in CAD and FCC is contacted other than by phone about a possible cliff rescue (with or without injuries) on or near the cliffs, FCC will immediately inform Lifeguard Dispatch. Whenever possible, FCC will transmit information to Lifeguard Dispatch on Lifeguard Dispatch 1.
- c. When the LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE is out of service in CAD and Lifeguard Dispatch has a caller on the phone reporting a possible cliff rescue (with or without injuries) on or near the cliffs, they shall include FCC on a conference call and/or transfer call so that FCC dispatchers can speak directly to the reporting party.

2. Response Matrix

- a. LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE (Lifeguard Dispatch) - the LIFEGUARD CLIFF RESCUE RESPONSE is able to assess and mitigate most non-injury cliff rescues without additional resources. In all cases when the victim is either injured or non-injury can't be confirmed, a first responder engine/truck, an ALS ambulance, and an Air Ops notification will be added to the dispatch.
 - 1) Response to a non-injury cliff rescue will include:
 - a) Two (2) Sergeant Units
 - b) Lifeguard Rescue Unit
 - c) Marine Safety Lieutenant
 - d) Air Ops Notification
 - 2) Response to an injured person or person whose injury status is unknown

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- a) Two (2) Sergeant Units
 - b) Lifeguard Rescue Unit
 - c) Marine Safety Lieutenant
 - d) A first responder unit
 - e) ALS ambulance
 - f) Air Ops Notification
 - g) BC Notification
- b. Fire Cliff Rescue Response (FCC Dispatch)
- 1) Response to a non-injury cliff rescue will include
 - a) One Engine
 - b) One Truck
 - c) One BC
 - d) Fire Rescue Unit
 - e) Air Ops Notification
 - f) Lifeguard Sergeant Unit (to provide area familiarization and support)
 - g) Lieutenant Notification
 - 2) Response to an injured person or person whose injury status is unknown
 - a) One Engine
 - b) One Truck
 - c) One BC
 - d) Fire Rescue Unit
 - e) ALS Ambulance
 - f) Air Ops Notification
 - g) Lifeguard Sergeant Unit (to provide area familiarization and support)
 - h) Lieutenant Notification
3. Communications
- All coastal cliff rescue responses will be assigned a common radio command and tactical channel.
- a. Lifeguard cliff rescue responses will typically be conducted on Lifeguard Dispatch 2 and FIREMARS (direct or non-repeated)
 - 1) Fire Personnel should utilize FMARd (13P) in place of FIREMARS (13A).
 - 2) FMARd (13P) is the same frequency as FIREMARS (13A), however FMARd (13P) is already in direct mode (non-repeated).

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- 3) The FIREMARS (13A) channel may be manually configured into direct mode. This can be accomplished by depressing the “DIR” icon twice.
- b. Fire cliff rescue response will be the assigned command and tactical channels as determined by FCC.
4. En-route and On-Scene
 - a. Request and ensure all responding Fire-Rescue units contact the IC on the assigned incident channel.
 - b. If information is insufficient to determine the exact location, beach units, vessels and/or closest helicopter shall be utilized for searching and spotting.
 - c. Once the victim is located, determine the best rescue method.
 - d. Make verbal or physical contact with the victim; question and assess the victim for injury and provide specific direction to the victim.
 - e. For an injured person or a person whose injury status is unknown:
 - 1) Lifeguard Cliff Rescue Response - a Lifeguard EMT shall make appropriate patient contact to stabilize the victim and initiate patient care. A Fire Operations Paramedic shall then be lowered to the patient to conduct an appropriate paramedic level assessment.
 - 2) Fire Cliff Rescue Response – a Firefighter shall make appropriate patient contact to stabilize the victim and initiate patient care. A second Firefighter shall then be lowered to the patient to assist; one of the Firefighters shall be a paramedic and provide an appropriate paramedic level assessment.
 - f. Apply a Risk/Benefit analysis considering scene size-up, the nature of the call, patient needs, accessibility, and availability of resources.
 - g. Air Ops
 - 1) Upon receiving an Air Ops notification the helicopter crew will suit up and be waiting in the aircraft ready to launch.
 - 2) The IC will determine the need to respond the helicopter as soon as reasonably possible.
 - 3) The Crew Chief will provide inbound notification to the IC.
 - 4) The IC will provide mission direction to the helicopter (example: reconnaissance, extrication, etc.).
 - 5) Until the IC provides mission direction to the helicopter, the helicopter shall remain off-station.
 - h. Determine whether the victim should be lowered or raised.
 - i. Determine location for anchors.

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- j. Update Dispatch and revise responding resources if needed.
- k. Communicate a rescue plan.
 - 1) Assign specific jobs (*See “ICS Organizational Chart” on pages 8-9)
 - 2) Designate a line of sight tactical channel
 - 3) Ensure safety checks are performed
 - 4) Communicate with and direct resources as they arrive
 - 5) Team goal: rescuer over the side within 10 minutes of establishing anchor locations.
- l. Once the rescuer contacts the victim, the rescuer shall treat as trained.
 - 1) Revise rescue plan as necessary
 - 2) Execute rescue
- m. Clean up
 - 1) Inventory
 - 2) Tag gear
- n. Debrief/Critiques – The IC of each cliff rescue will ensure that an After Action Review (AAR) is conducted on scene:
 - 1) What was supposed to happen?
 - 2) What actually happened?
 - 3) What was the difference?
 - 4) Why and what lessons were learned?

E. CLIFF RESCUE SUMMARY REPORT (See Appendix - C)

The IC is responsible for completing the on-scene debrief/critique (see above), as well as the Cliff Rescue Incident Summary Report. This information will be sent to MS 32A, care of the Cliff Instructor Team Leader.

The Cliff Rescue Working Group will be responsible for reviewing the rescue operation of selected incidents.

F. ICS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

- 1. Incident Commander
 - a. Most coastal cliff rescues are small with a single layer span of control of 5:1 or fewer.
 - b. For more complex cliff rescue incidents (e.g., those involving a patient with major trauma) the incident command structure can be expanded as appropriate.
- 2. Rescue Group Supervisor - Supervises the rescue operation and reports to the IC

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3. Safety Officer
 - a. Overall scene safety
 - b. Identification and mitigation of hazards
 - c. Safety check of all components of technical systems
 - d. Unless an incident becomes large and/or complex the Safety Officer will personally perform all duties listed

4. Main Line Operator
 - a. Also known as the rigger
 - b. The Mainline Operator is responsible for construction and operation of the load bearing portion of the rescue system.
 - c. The Main Line Operator will also become the haul time leader as necessary.
 - d. Note: If the extrication method is determined to be a haul, additional personal will be assigned for the haul team. Number of personnel assigned should be based on a haul factor of 12:1.

5. Belay Operator - Responsible for construction and operation of the belay or safety line portion of the rescue system

6. Edge Attendant
 - a. Sets edge protection and mitigates line friction
 - b. Assists the rescuer and patient through edge transitions
 - c. Relays communication between rescuer and IC and system operators
 - d. Note: an additional Edge Attendant may be assigned when raising a patient in a stretcher.

7. Rescuer
 - a. Accesses the patient
 - b. Secures the patient
 - c. Assesses the patient
 - d. Extricates the patient

SEE ATTACHED ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS:

Appendix A

Appendix B

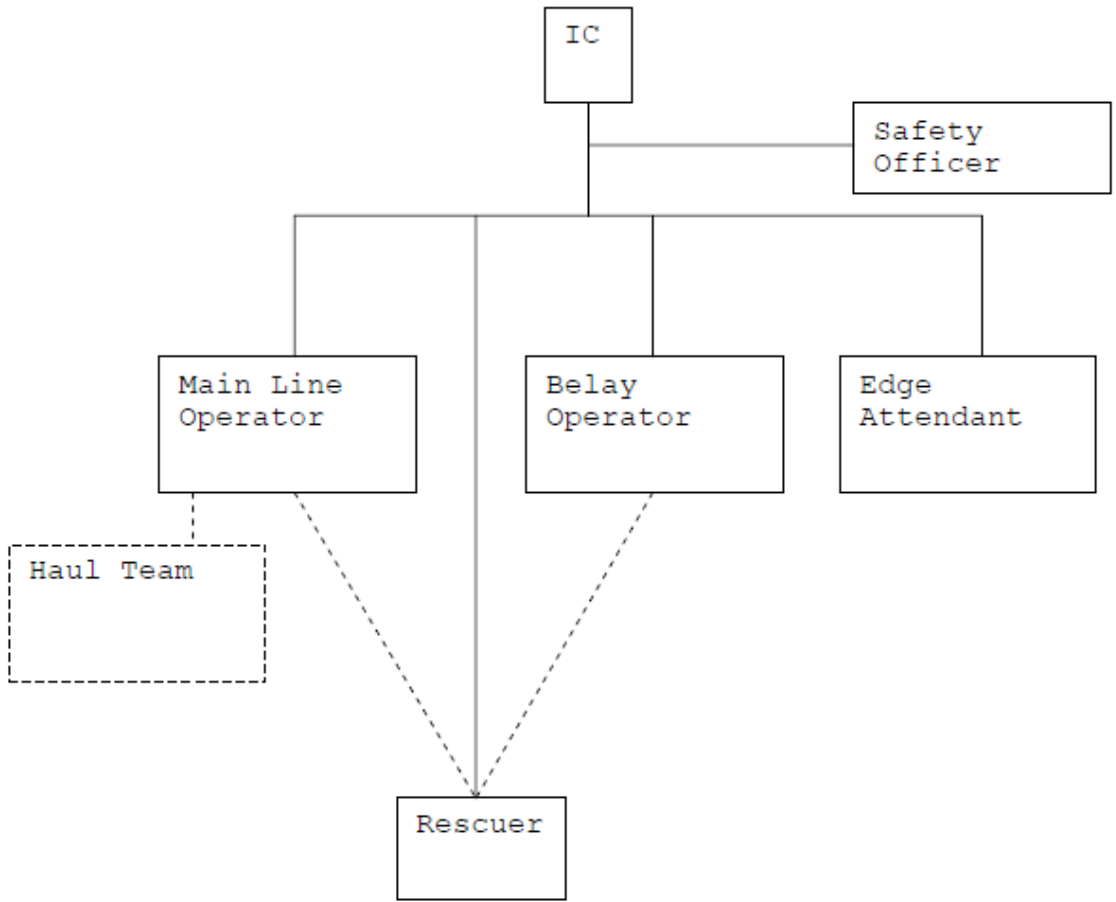
SEE ATTACHED

Appendix C - Cliff Rescue Incident Summary Report

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APPENDIX A

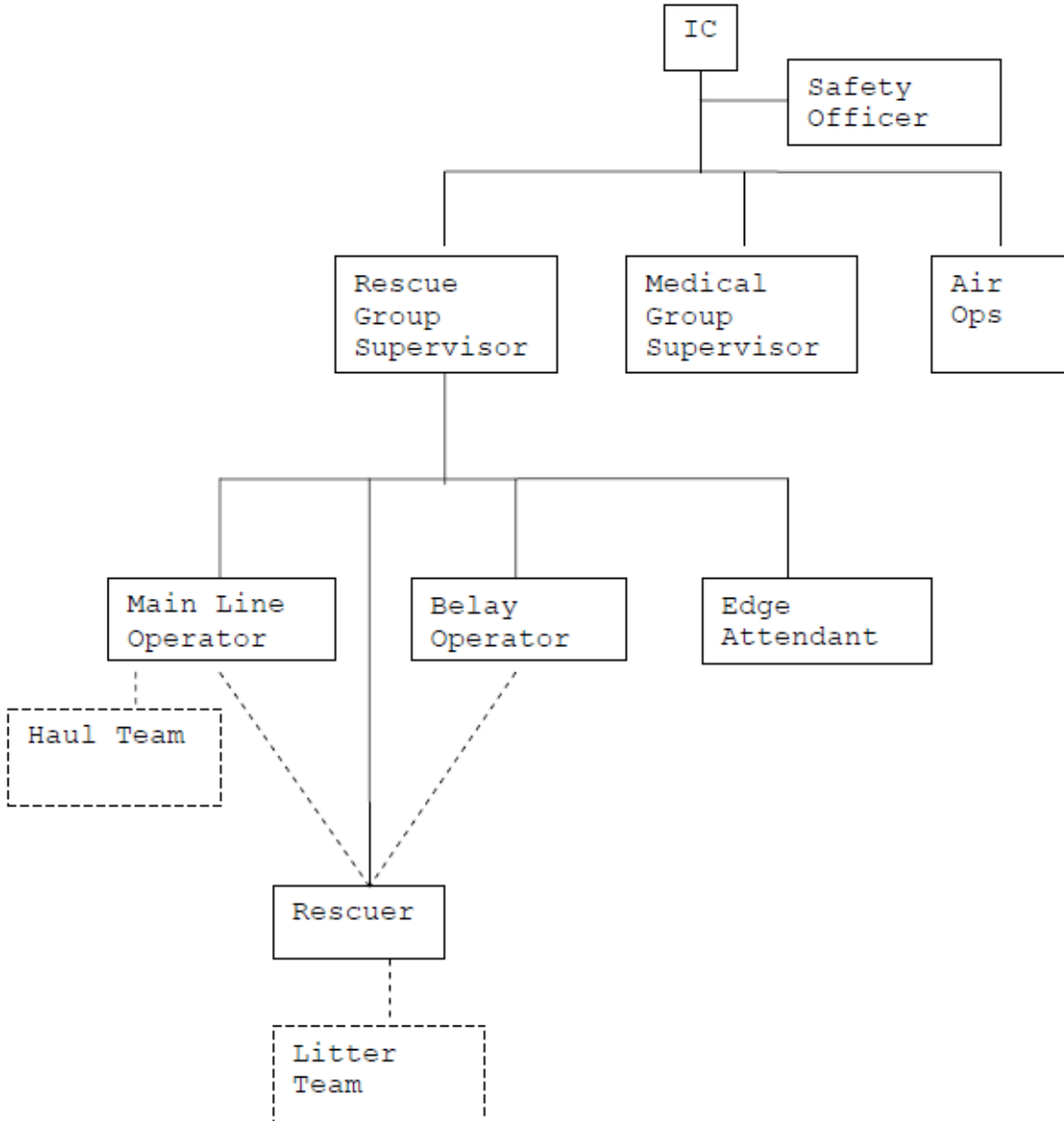
Single Patient Cliff Rescue: Uninjured



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APPENDIX B

Single Patient Cliff Rescue: Injured



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APPENDIX - C

Submit by E-mail to the
Cliff Instructor Team Leader

Print Form

CLIFF RESCUE INCIDENT SUMMARY REPORT

Complete and mail to:
Cliff Instructor Team Leader, MS 32A

Date			
Time of call	□ □ : □ □		
IC name			
Location / Inc. #			
Time rescuer over side			
How notified of call			
Number of victims			
Patient status			
Rescue type			
Type of system			
Radio Channels			
Rescue 44 response			
Helicopter response			
Class Terrain			
Main Anchors used			
Belay Anchors used			
Resources at scene	SD Fire-Rescue and ALS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALS Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal Fire <input type="checkbox"/>
	SD Lifeguard Services	<input type="checkbox"/> State Lifeguard Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
On scene AAR conducted	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>		
Comments, Operational and/or Policy Issues:			
Incident Description:			