The International Manual of Basic Rescue Methods

REVISED EDITION

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Dedicated to my brother,
Lyman Nethercutt,
who dedicated his life to his fellow man
and inspired me to work in the
Fire and Rescue Service.

In memory of
Jim Finison
a fellow rescue worker
and friend
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INTRODUCTION

This manual covers topics related to what is frequently called heavy rescue service. While it does contain a chapter on handling casualties, it is not about emergency medical service, which is altogether a different subject and for which there are a number of excellent, recently published texts and training manuals. Although many people are both rescue technicians and emergency medical technicians, the two services require different knowledge and different skills.

Both of these fields of service rely heavily upon volunteer personnel. Many volunteers do not have the time to develop and maintain a high degree of knowledge and skill in both fields. Some may have a stronger inclination toward one or the other, and because of a background of experience be better equipped to work in one or the other field. The author believes that for these reasons it is important to have separate and distinct literature for both fields of service.

This manual covers specifically the topics related to the use of rigging in rescue and rescue from upper stories of multi-storied buildings.

There are several books on the market covering the same topics. However, these are either older publications or do not cover the subject comprehensively. Furthermore, they are not uniform in the methods and techniques they recommend. The author has reviewed all the available literature and has selected the best methods from each. In addition, he and his colleagues who specialize in this field of service have tested each method and in some cases have devised new and better ways of effecting rescue.

The manual will be useful both for training and for reference. Furthermore, it will tend to standardize procedures in rescue service. The Industrial Rescue Training Symposium (IRTS) has adopted this manual as its standard and guide for heavy duty rescue competition and for basic rescue methods. Several state rescue associations have also adopted this manual as their curriculum. Some of the major chemical and petroleum refineries are using this manual as their guide for training their emergency rescue teams.

The material in this revised edition will bring the text up-to-date with "state-of-the-art" equipment. The author has stated on many occasions that rescue skills have changed very little in the past, and he is of the opinion that skills will change very little in the future. The fact that we are developing better equipment for rescue work has caused rescue operations to be safer and easier. This manual will now take the rescuer from the very basic skills to the latest techniques being used today.

Rescue personnel must develop their skills and utilize the best equipment available to be efficient with their rescue operations today. They will have to develop a thorough understanding of skills and equipment to be able to put it altogether in time of need. No manual will give every detail of what to do in every emergency. If the rescuer has a thorough background in basic rescue skills and understands the capabilities of his equipment, then and only then will rescue operations become safe and easier to accomplish. Problems arise when rescue personnel can not see their way through an emergency. This is usually due to a lack of knowledge of skills, equipment, or both.

We can all "bog-down" with a lot of fancy words, and the thought of being "up-to-date", but remember one thing: "There is no need to move on to higher ground, unless we are thoroughly familiar with where we are".

A word from the author

This rescue manual is based on sound rescue techniques using a minimum amount of equipment. I have used and taught others these skills for many years. They have proven to be simple, sound and safe. I have raised and lowered hundreds of live patients using these techniques without failure. You, the rescuer, can do the same by learning the techniques used in this basic rescue manual. I do not want to undersell equipment but rather emphasize the use of only that equipment needed for the job. Quite often rescuers become uncertain and overwhelmed by the amount of equipment on the rescue scene.

After teaching municipal (and rural) rescue teams for twenty years, I changed over to teaching industrial rescue teams. I realized many years ago that if rescue personnel would learn a basic knowledge of ropes/knots, anchors, use of pulleys to gain mechanical advantage and changes of direction they could achieve a successful rescue. The environment that we work in will determine our anchors. Municipal, mountain and industrial rescue gives us a distinct difference in the environment that we work in. Our basic equipment and rescue skills do not differ that much. When we realize that we are going to raise or lower people being rescued either vertical or horizontal when we are using stretchers, it narrows down the skills that we must learn. We use friction devices for lowers and mechanical advantage for raises. Changes of direction with pulleys should be used only to gain an advantage.
Rescue personnel should learn to "see through" a rescue operation. If you can see or visualize a rescue in your mind, you see the problems before you commit to a rescue procedure. This allows us to make changes before we encounter a problem. This is extremely important for the rescue team leader. Consistency is very important. No matter what method your rescue team uses in rescue training or a "real" rescue, be consistent in your method. If you use the same knots tied the same way each time, it is easy to make a final check before we load the patient on the ropes. This will also build confidence in ourselves and the equipment. Without confidence we keep adding equipment and knots hoping that will make it safe.

I have total confidence in the skills and techniques that are outlined in this manual. I have had many successful rescues with these skills and techniques. I challenge each of you who use this manual to learn the basic skills well, have confidence in your ability and equipment, "see through" your problem and you too will have successful rescues.

- Dawson Nethercutt