



Water Rescue Rope: Part 2 The Team & Safety

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Ready to Serve and Sustain Our Community

Water Rescue Rope Team

We suggest forming teams of 5 people. Everyone on the team should practice throwing the rescue rope. The two best throwers take the lead. The others are Belayers. However, all team members should practice throwing. Everyone should have a water rescue rope and knows how to throw. Everyone on the team must be able to rotate through the line up to do every job. This cross-training and rotation is the source of team consistency and sustainability as everyone has a chance to excel and grow into leadership positions.

Team Line-up: For general safety, keep the rope on the downstream side of your body. If there is an unexpected dangerous pull on the rope, the you simply let go of the rope. You won't get knocked over or pulled into the water.

Team Positions:

1. T = 1 Thrower
 2. BU = 1 Back-up Thrower
 3. B = 3 Belayers
- R = Retrieval Point (Thrower goes to this position to retrieve a rope after a missed throw.)

Team Members: A team has 5 members.

Team Lead: Responsible for team safety.

Coordinates team action with Net

Control; has the final decision to Go-No Go for any rescue attempt; is 1st Thrower in the team line up.

Assistant Team Lead: Assist Team Lead as needed; responsible for equipment inspection and readiness; is the initial Back-up Thrower; gathers information for any recovered survivors.

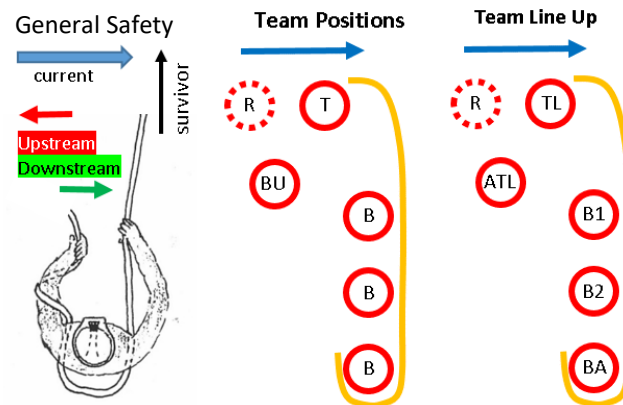
Belay-1: First in line of Belayers, closest to Thrower.

Belay-2: Between Belay-Ancor and Belay 1.

Belay-Ancor: Belayer at end of the line; secures the line and is responsible to declare when to release the line if unable to hold without jeopardizing the team.

Team Strategy:

- The goal is to throw the water rescue rope to a person in the water as quickly as possible. Speed and accuracy can save lives.
- If there is a missed throw, the Back-up Thrower must be in position quickly to throw a rope to the survivor.
- Team members must rotate to the various positions. Everyone could become the next Thrower.



Missed Throw Rotation Pattern: If a throw misses, the person in line moves up the rotation pattern in the diagram to the right. For example: TL has thrown and missed.

1. TL steps aside to position "R" and begins retrieving the water rescue rope.
2. ATL moves from "BU" to "T"; B1 moves to the "BU"; B2 goes to "B1", BA move forward on the Belay line. When TL has retrieved the throw line, TL goes to the Belay-Anchor position. The Rotation continues until a survivor is rescued.
3. Belay Anchor Rotation Detail.

- A Person "A" arrives to take over BA position. "A" grasps the rope in left hand from BA. BA unwinds rope from left arm. Everyone shifts forward on the Belaying rope.
- B Person "A" rotates clockwise, winds the rope around their left arm and assumes the Belay Anchor position.
- C The person who was in position BA moves up the line.

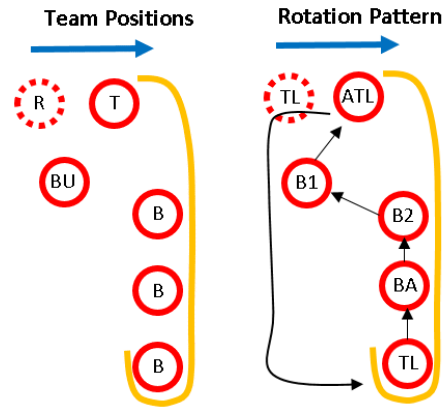
Everyone stays on the upstream side of the rope.

[**Note:** The diameter of the rope determines its load capacity. If the load exceeds the rope's capacity, the rope may break.]

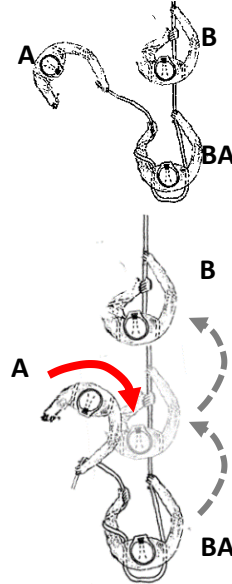
Polypropylene Rope Strength			
Rope Diameter		Ave breaking strength	
(in)	(mm)	lbs.	kg
1/4	6	1,270	576
5/16	8	1,920	871
3/8	10	2,550	1,157

Recovery Positions: When the Thrower is on target, the survivor grabs the water rescue rope. Expect a jerk or tug on the rope depending on the water velocity and the size of the person or number of people on the rope. With the rope properly belayed, the current will pull the survivor down the stream. Thus, the angle of the rescue rope will not be perpendicular to the river bank.

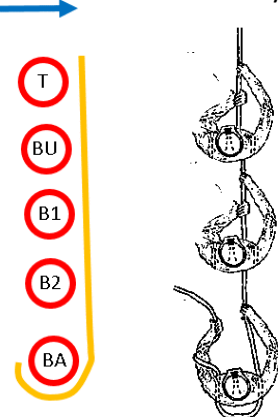
- The Thrower and Back-up Thrower go to the front of the Belaying section of the rope.
- The Thrower keeps eye contact with the survivor and directs the team in pulling the survivor to shore.
- Thrower takes charge of belaying team as to when and how hard to pull on the rope. Once the survivor is on the rope, the current carries them down stream.



Belay Anchor Rotation



Recovery Positions Safe Belaying

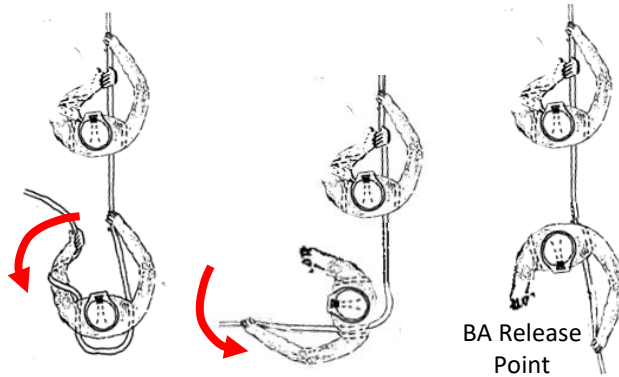


- Assistant Team Lead gets survivor information and passes survivor on to care providers, then rejoins the team. When time is available Team Lead relays survivor info to Net Control.

Safe Belaying:

Team members MUST always stay on the upstream side of the rope. If there is a sudden or unexpected pull on the rope, no one will be knocked over or pulled into the water.

- Emergency Release: If the team is in danger and cannot safely hold the water rescue rope, the command “Release!” is given by any team member who sees the danger. If the Belay Anchor loses firm footing and cannot hold the line, BA can give the command “Release!”
- When you hear “Release!” immediately let go of the rope.
- The Belay Anchor unwinds the rope around the left arm and turns 180° to the left and releases the rope.



Note: Post Emergency Release Recovery—The team regroups. The TL surveys the team for readiness. Then reassesses the situation to determine if continued rescue work is a Go-No Go. TL reports team status to Net Control.

Safety First / General Team Safety

Safety is your top priority: 1) Your safety; 2) Your team’s safety; 3) safety of the survivor in the water. It may seem uncaring to the survivor. But the reality is based on some simple facts. 1) If you and your team are not safe, you cannot expect to rescue anyone. 2) The survivor in the water is in no position to help you or keep you and your team safe.

Rescue scenes are chaotic. It is up to you to bring some order and stability. The simplistic 3-zone layout helps you do this quickly. The survivors are in the “Hot Zone” (the zone of highest risk and danger to you and your team). The “Cool Zone” is relatively safe. As you move toward the survivor you enter the “Warm Zone” and closer to danger.

Remember avoid getting into the water!

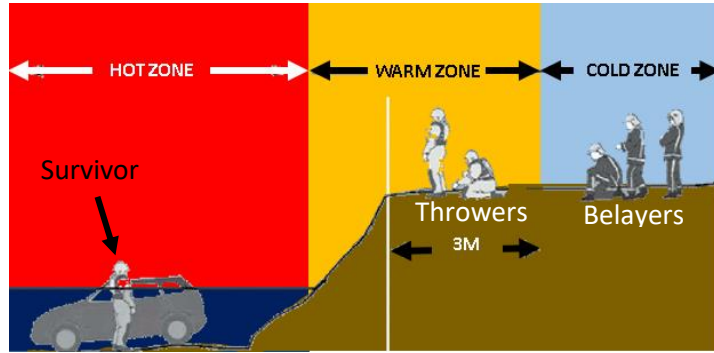
- Everyone on the team should have a life vest. Avoid wearing heavy, bulky clothing when going near water.
- Everyone on the team should have a water rescue rope. Everyone should be ready to throw their rope as needed. Anytime there is a missed throw, the thrower retrieves their rope upstream from the rest of the team. Keep things neat. Don’t get tangled in the ropes.

Hot Zone	Warm Zone	Cool Zone
High Risk	Moderate Risk	Minimal Risk
Survivor	You	Your Team

This 3-Zone method is a simple way to organize the accident scene

Position the Team: Once on the disaster scene, quickly observe and assess the situation. Every situation is different; none will be ideal. Conditions can change, so assess and reassess as needed. Do your best to keep yourself and your team safe.

- Locate the survivors. Observe the situation.
- Identify the Hot, Warm, and Cool zones for the site.
- Assemble the team in the cool zone.
- Decide “Go-No Go” and report to Net Control.
- The Thrower and Back-up Thrower approach the Hot zone. (If space permits, keep the Belayers in the Cool zones at the ready.) If the first throw misses, a second rope can be thrown almost immediately. The Belayers hold the end of the rope ready to pull the survivor to safety. If there is a missed throw, the rope is quickly retrieved and made ready for another throw.
- Any recovered survivors are moved to the Cool zone for treatment by other emergency personnel. 🌿



All team members are responsible for their personal safety AND the safety of the team.

Any unsafe equipment or conditions must be brought to the attention of the Team Leaders. There is safety in numbers. Teams work together. A team is stronger than any one individual. The collective knowledge, skills, experience of a team is greater than the mere sum of the individuals on the team. This is synergy where the whole team is greater than the sum of its parts.