

## Rope Rescue Standards & the Wilderness SAR Card

The Wilderness SAR Card has five (5) check-off spots for skills relating to rope rescue and/or personal skills to operate safely in the rope rescue, (i.e. vertical environment). These check-offs and the recommend period of certification for each, particulars of which are discussed later, are:

- (1) Personal Vertical Skills - .....2 years
- (2) Rope Technician - Basic .....2 years
- (3) Rope Technician - Intermediate.....4 years
- (4) Rope Specialist - Basic .....2 years
- (5) Rope Specialist - Intermediate.....4 years

Initial certification for personal vertical skills and basic rope rescue shall be through a Department-recognized course, or through a challenge process administered by a Department-approved technical rescue instructor using the criteria listed below.

### Operational classifications and the applicability of standards

In the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, for certification purposes, there is no difference between an actual mission, a "demonstration", an evaluation, or a training event. The objective hazards of all over-the-side and/or rope rescue require appropriate certifications and adherence to these standards.

### Field employment of certified and non-certified personnel

In order to participate in a rope rescue field mission – or a Rope Rescue Evaluation – as a team member after January 1, 2000 SAR team members must have on their Wilderness SAR Card:

- Current Basic Personal Vertical Skills certification
- Current Basic Rope Technician/Specialist certification

Non-certified personnel may be used only in a support role, which is defined as one that has no hands-on rigging or operation of any part of the rescue system. Appropriate roles for non-certified personnel include:

- These personnel may provide logistic support such as hauling equipment, gear cache management, or command post support.
- They may provide limited operational support that does not involve rope rescue operations, such as providing a non-technical litter team.
- They may participate as a member of a haul team under the direct supervision of a basic-level certified rope rescue technician.
- They may also provide record and/or log-keeping.
- If any of the functions described above takes them into proximity to the rope rescue operation, they must have proper safety equipment and personal vertical skills certification.

Non-certified personnel may only participate in a Rope Rescue Evaluation in a support role as described above.

**Certification requirements for ICS positions**

It is not necessary that an Incident Commander for a mission involving rope rescue be certified to perform rope rescue. However, the closer one is to the actual rope rescue operation, the more acute the need to be actually qualified in rope rescue operations becomes. It is not the best practice to assume that just because a person is appointed to any given position, he or she is knowledgeable in the necessary skills.

- Any person directly in charge of a rope rescue operation must be certified at the Intermediate Rope Rescue level. This shall include all persons making decisions as to what is rigged, who will rig it, where it will be rigged, and other direct involvement of this nature.
- Any person appointed as Safety Officer for a rope rescue operation must be certified at the Intermediate Rope Rescue level. Training for all teams will include reinforcement of the concept that everyone is responsible for safety and the appointment of a safety officer does not relieve everyone's responsibility in this area.

**Definitions**

Rope rescue operations are no longer broken down into low, medium, and high angle. The following "industry standard" definitions are now in effect:

Description	Slope	Risk	Rope Required	Remarks
Flat Terrain	0° to 15°	Minimal	0-1 rope	Risk/ropes required are dependent on subjective hazards for all categories.
Low Angle	15° to 40°	Low	0-2 ropes	
Steep Angle	40° to 60°	Extreme	2 ropes	
High Angle	60° +	Less Extreme	2 Ropes	

All teams which have passed RROC Evaluation are considered "high angle", with the proviso that operations are supervised by appropriately trained personnel.

A team must have a minimum of 8 certified personnel on hand to conduct a rope rescue operation. The specific number employed will be determined by the Operations Chief.

**Composite Team Issues**

If a team is mounting a response to a mission that may include a rope rescue operation and they do not have sufficient personnel on hand, it is a simple matter to access additional, qualified resources through the Volunteer Forces on-call duty officer. A composite team can be formed and utilized.

A composite team is comprised of rescuers with the requisite skill levels on their SAR Card, supervised by appropriately-certified personnel.

A composite team may be formed from RROC-certified teams in any combination, provided at least two Intermediate Rope personnel are present and act in the appropriate positions. This team may undertake any level of rope rescue appropriate to Intermediate level supervision.

**Classifications:****Basic Rope Technician (BRT)**

**Basic Rope Rescue:** Defined as those skills necessary to safely construct and operate basic rope rescue systems. Basic rope rescue systems include: Anchor systems, belay systems, lowering systems, litter rigging/patient packaging, and mechanical advantage systems.

**Certification Requirements:**

- Possess current Personal Vertical Skills certification.
- Shall successfully complete and pass the Technical Rescue Basics Course (TRBC).

**Re-Certification Requirements:**

- Possess current Personal Vertical Skills certification.
- Shall pass the Basic Rope Technician Skills test every 2 years.

**Basic Rigging Specialist (BRS)****NEW CLASSIFICATION!**

- Shall meet all Basic Rope Technician (BRT) requirements and Personal Vertical Skill (PVS) requirements, except for the vertical rope portions of PVS.
- Cannot go over the side on missions. Examples: cannot be Attendant, Edge Tender, Pick-Off Rescuer etc.
- Basic Rigging Specialist (BRS) are only allowed on RROC Certified Teams.
- Only 30% of a RROC Certified team can be Rigging Specialists. 70% of a RROC Certified team shall be fully qualified county rope technicians.

**Intermediate Rope Technician (IRT)**

**Intermediate Rope Rescue:** Defined as those skills necessary to:

- (1) Safely design, construct and operate basic rigging systems at the low, steep and high angle of operation.
- (2) Supervise basic rope rescuers during a technical rescue.
- (3) Perform as a Safety Officer during a rope rescue operation.

**Certification Requirements**

- Possess current Personal Vertical Skills certification.
- Possess current Basic Rope Technician (BRT) certification.
- Possess current ICS-300 certification.
- Minimum of 3 years on a SBCSD SAR Team.
- Must complete a Department-approved Intermediate Rope Rescue Course.
- Shall be a BRT for at least 25 months.
- Shall be on a RROC certified team or on a team that is progressing towards their RROC certification.

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**Intermediate Rope Technician (IRT)** (Continued)

**Re-Certification Requirements**

- Shall pass the Basic Rope Technician Skills test every 2 years.
- Possess a current Personal Vertical Skills certification.
- Shall complete a Department-approved Intermediate Rope Rescue Course at least every 4 years.

**Intermediate Rigging Specialist (IRS)**

**NEW CLASSIFICATION!**

- Shall meet all Intermediate Rope Technician (IRT) requirements and Personal Vertical Skill (PVS) requirements, except for the vertical rope portions of PVS.
- Shall not go over the side on missions. Examples: cannot be Attendant, Edge Tender, Pick-off Rescuer, etc.
- Shall have been a fully qualified Intermediate Rope Technician (IRT) prior to this classification.
- Intermediate Rigging Specialist (IRS) is only allowed on RROC Certified Teams.
- Only 30% of a RROC Certified team can be Rigging Specialists. 70% of a RROC Certified team shall be fully qualified county rope technicians.

**Advanced Rope Technician**

This Classification has been dropped from the SAR Cards.

**These classifications shall be effective as of January 1, 2007.**