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## Confined Space Rescue

### Hiring Standby Rescuers or Developing an In-house Team

### Advantages and Disadvantages

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Many employers face a need to provide rescue services for workers who must enter and work within permit-required confined spaces. Non-entry rescue (or retrieval) is the preferred method of providing rescue, but may not be suitable in all applications. In these cases the employer must provide a trained and equipped entry rescue team.

There are two basic ways to provide rescue services. Employers can hire a team to standby for a specific period of time, or they can train and equip their employees to provide these services. Each is discussed in more detail below along with their advantages and disadvantages.

#### Hiring a Standby Team

Various organizations provide standby rescue services. Based on the job requirements, small teams of rescuers are dispatched to the job site. The exact number of rescuers depends on the number and location of exposed workers.

Some of these companies take a passive role on the jobsite; not interacting with the crews and waiting for something to go wrong. Others take a more pro-active approach. They participate in pre-job planning sessions, inspect PPE, conduct brief refresher training, and may serve as Entry Supervisors during confined space entries.

The professionalism of these teams also varies. Some consist of retired or off-duty firefighters seeking to supplement their income. Others, such as rope access companies, may be staffed by individuals with a rock-climbing background. The level of medical capability that can be offered may also vary with some companies offering only basic life support as opposed to advanced life support.

In our opinion companies that do not dispatch standby rescuers to each entry but instead direct the employer to call them when needed rarely meet the intent of OSHA's rescue standards.



### *Advantages:*

- Professional standby rescuers are generally trained to a higher level than in-house teams.
- They provide their own equipment and usually have a good understanding of safe work practices.
- Most rescue teams recognize the need to provide safety oversight which can prevent accidents from occurring in the first place. They may also be capable of conducting safety training on various topics.
- Costs for these services can usually be calculated accurately if the job duration is known and costs can be assigned to various departments or contractors as needed.

### *Disadvantages:*

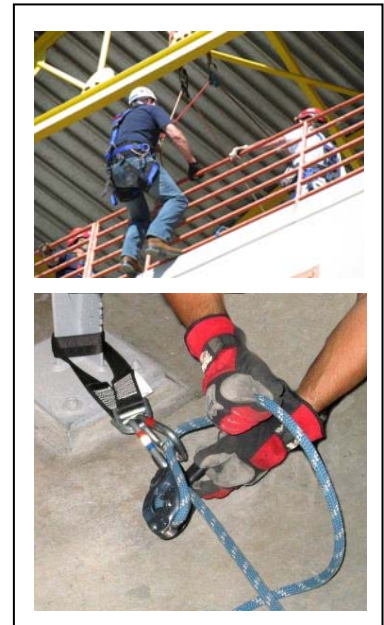
- The rescue capability is only available within a narrow time frame.
- Significant costs can accrue when the job takes longer than required.
- The quality of the actual rescue and safety oversight capabilities can be difficult to assess since.

## **Training and Equipping an In-house Team**

Many employers who need rescue have trained and equipped an in-house rescue team. These teams generally require three, eight-hour days of initial training and they are also required to conduct practice rescues. Once trained the team should have the skills to develop pre-plans for the types of rescues they may perform. This includes permit-space and fall protection rescue.

Performing these types of rescues requires a number of skills. In addition to the rope rescue skills, the team must be able to:

- Develop and update rescue procedures (pre-plans).
- Perform all appropriate team roles
- Interface and coordinate with outside resources (e.g., off-site emergency responders) as needed.
- Select, inspect, and store equipment.
- Practice all skills as needed.



In addition to the training, teams will need to conduct practice rescues as required by the regulations. These practice rescues allow the team to hone their skills and develop improved pre-plans. As the team improves, so will their ability to perform rescues that are more complex.

### *Advantages*

- If your employees or contractors make a number of permit space entries, in-house teams can provide rescue at a lower overall cost than standby teams.
- In-house teams can also provide rescue for other exposures such as working on scaffolds or using fall arrest equipment.

- These teams can also provide the community with rescue services in the event of a major disaster.
- An in-house team can also provide a morale boost for other workers who have confidence that there will be an effective response in the event of an accident.
- Since they are trained to a high level in confined space safety, rescuers can provide safety support when planning entries.

### *Disadvantages*

- The initial cost of training and equipping a team is higher than hiring a team for jobs of relatively short duration. In our experience the total initial cost is about \$13,000 for a ten-member team.
- The team must also conduct practice rescues on a regular basis.
- Equipment wears out or gets lost and must be replaced over time. We estimate that it costs \$500 - \$1000 per year to replace equipment for a typical rescue team.

### **Summary**

Generally well-defined jobs of short duration will benefit most from hiring standby rescuers, but the actual capability and professionalism of these teams can be difficult to assess. When contracting with a team, costs can be predicted accurately since most companies charge for these services on an hourly basis.

Once the initial investment is made to train and equip an in-house team, the employer gains considerable advantages including a higher level of safety awareness and the ability to provide rescue on short notice. The team can also respond to a wide variety of medical emergencies that may or may not involve permit spaces.



**SAFETY &  
RESCUE  
SERVICES**

## Industrial Safety & Rescue > Standby

When workers must be exposed to hazardous environments - whether deep in a confined space or high overhead - protect them with the knowledge that the best on-site safety and rescue services are just seconds away.

D2000's safety and rescue standby teams are:

- Highly-trained and experienced
- Properly equipped, and
- Serious about protecting worker's health and well-being.

### Capabilities

Our safety and rescue experts can provide the support and security your workers deserve. Our teams are fully trained in:

- Confined Space Operations
- Fall Protection
- Excavation Safety
- Hazmat Operations
- Respiratory Protection
- First Aid and Basic Life Support

In addition, they are qualified to teach these subjects to your workers.

**As soon as our team arrives at your facility, they take assertive steps to prevent problems.**



### Processes

Our safety processes include:

- Developing, validating, and reviewing your job safety procedures.
- Developing pre-incident plans (pre-plans) for confined space and high-angle rescue scenarios.
- Training (or retraining) workers in specific safety topics.
- Inspecting equipment.
- Conducting/facilitating pre-job safety briefings.
- Supervising work activities.

This process helps ensure that you can :

- Satisfy the regulatory requirements, and
- Provide your workers with the highest levels of protection.