

LESSON

Lowering a patient from a highpoint in a Stokes basket requires careful planning and execution to ensure the safety of both the patient and the rescuers. Here are the step-by-step directions:

Preparation

Assess the Situation: Evaluate the environment and any potential hazards. Ensure all rescuers understand the plan and their roles.

Gather Equipment: Ensure you have all necessary equipment, including ropes, carabiners, pulleys, anchor systems, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for the rescuers.

Secure the Patient: Ensure the patient is properly secured in the Stokes basket with straps to prevent movement during the lowering process.

Setting Up the System

Establish Anchor Points: Identify and secure strong anchor points above the highpoint. These could be natural features like trees or rocks, or artificial anchors like bolts or ground stakes.

Set Up Main Line: Attach the main lowering rope to the Stokes basket using a secure knot (e.g., a figure-eight follow-through or a double fisherman's knot) and carabiners. Thread the rope through a descent control device (e.g., a rescue 8 or a brake bar rack).

Backup Safety Line: Set up a secondary safety line as a backup. This line should also be anchored securely and attached to the Stokes basket using an independent attachment point. Use a separate belay device.

Lowering the Patient

Position Rescuers: Assign one or two rescuers to control the descent using the main line. They should be in a position where they can see each other and communicate effectively.

Test the System: Before lowering the patient, perform a test with a light load to ensure that all equipment is functioning correctly and that there is no slippage at the anchor points or control devices.

Communication: Establish clear communication signals between all team members. This can include verbal commands or hand signals, ensuring everyone understands terms like "lower," "stop," "slack," and "tension."

Performing the Lower

Begin Lowering: Slowly start to lower the Stokes basket, keeping constant communication between the rescuers. The main rope should be fed smoothly through the descent control device to avoid jerks.

Monitor the Patient: Continuously check on the patient's condition and position within the basket. Ensure they remain secure and comfortable.

Control the Descent: The rescuers controlling the ropes should maintain a steady and controlled pace. The person managing the safety line should take in the slack and be ready to lock off the line if needed.

Conclusion

Land the Basket: Once the basket reaches the lower point, carefully land it on a stable surface. Ensure the patient remains secure and safe during the landing process.

Secure the Area: Once the patient is on the ground, unhook the basket from the ropes, but keep the patient secured until they can be safely transferred to further care.

De-brief: After the operation, conduct a debrief with the team to review what went well and what could be improved for future operations.