**Chapter 26: Assisting Special Rescue Teams**

**Chief Concepts**

* A TRI is a complex rescue incident involving vehicles or machinery, water or ice, rope techniques, trench or excavation collapse, confined spaces, structural collapse, SAR, or hazardous materials that requires specially trained personnel and special equipment.
* Training in technical rescue areas is conducted at three levels: awareness, operations, and technician. Awareness training serves as an introduction to the topic with an emphasis on recognizing hazards, securing the scene, and calling for appropriate assistance. There is no actual use of rescue skills at the awareness level. Most of the training that beginning fire fighters receive is at the awareness level.
* The following types of TRIs are often encountered by fire fighters:
  + Vehicle and machinery rescue
  + Confined-space rescue
  + Rope rescue
  + Trench and excavation rescue
  + Structural-collapse rescue
  + Water and ice rescue
  + Wilderness rescue
  + Hazardous materials incidents
* To become proficient in handling these types of situations, you must take a formal course to gain specialized knowledge and skills.
* When assisting rescue team members, keep five guidelines in mind:
  + Be safe.
  + Follow orders.
  + Work as a team.
  + Think.
  + Follow the golden rule of public service: treat others as you would like to be treated.
* The basic steps of special rescue operations are outlined here:
  + Preparation—Train with the specialized rescue teams in your area, and become familiar with the terminology used in the field.
  + Response—A technical rescue team will usually respond with a rescue unit supported by other units such as a medic unit, an engine company, a truck company, and a chief.
  + Arrival and size-up—The first company officer to arrive on the scene should assume command and rapidly assess the situation. Do not rush into the incident scene until the situation has been assessed and the hazards identified.
  + Stabilization—Once the needed resources are on the way and the scene is safe to enter, begin to stabilize the scene by establishing a perimeter around the rescue site.
  + Access—Identify the actual reason for the rescue, and work toward freeing the victim safely. Communicate with the victims at all times, and initiate emergency medical care as soon as safe access is made to the victim.
  + Disentanglement—Once precautions have been taken and the reason for entrapment has been identified, the victim needs to be freed as safely as possible. Disentanglement removes what is confining the victim from around the victim.
  + Removal—This step could be as simple as assisting a victim up a ladder or as complex as packaging the victim in a Stokes basket and lifting him or her out of a trench.
  + Transport—Once the victim has been removed from the hazard area, transport to an appropriate medical facility is accomplished by EMS personnel.
  + Security of the scene and preparation for the next call—Once the victim has been transported, the scene must be stabilized by the rescue crew to ensure that no one else becomes injured.
  + Postincident analysis—Identify what worked well and which procedures could work better.
* Beginning with the initial dispatch of the rescue call, begin compiling facts and identifying factors pertinent to the call. The information received when an emergency call is received is important to the success of the rescue operation. The information should include the following details:
  + The location of the incident
  + The nature of the incident (kinds and number of vehicles)
  + The conditions and positions of victims
  + The conditions and positions of vehicles
  + The number of people trapped or injured, and the types of their injuries
  + Any specific or special hazard information
  + The name of the person calling and a number where that person can be reached
* A size-up should include the initial and continuous evaluation of the following issues:
  + Scope and magnitude of the incident
  + Risk–benefit analysis
  + Number of known and potential victims
  + Hazards
  + Access to the scene
  + Environmental factors
  + Available and necessary resources
  + Establishment of control perimeters
* After sizing up the scene, take the following precautions to avoid further injuries to the victims and to provide for the safety of other fire fighters:
  + Secure utility hazards.
  + Provide scene security.
  + Use the proper protective equipment for the emergency.
  + Activate the IMS.
  + Activate the personnel accountability system.
  + Make contact with the victim, and keep the victim calm.
* At any type of TRI, follow the orders of the company officer who receives direction from the IC. Many of the tasks assigned to fire fighters will involve moving equipment and objects from one place to another; others will involve protecting the team and victims.
* Vehicle and machinery rescues occur in many settings. These situations require responders to stabilize the machinery and ensure that the electricity is off.
* With a confined space, rescuers must ensure that a pure and adequate air supply is available before entering confined spaces.
* Low-angle and high-angle rope rescues require safe equipment, adequate training, and much caution.
* Trench and excavation rescues are hazardous and require responders to minimize the chance for secondary collapses.
* A damaged building is prone to structural collapse. Whenever a building has been damaged, assume that it may collapse. Consider fire scenes to be potential building collapses.
* Water rescue training is needed in almost all communities. Training, proper PFDs, and appropriate clothing are important to ensure rescuer safety.
* Wilderness rescue may be called for even when initial access to a lost or stranded individual occurs quickly.
* Hazardous materials incidents are not always dispatched as hazardous materials incidents, so be cautious when approaching any incident. Once the presence of a hazardous material is identified, protect yourself by staying out of the area exposed to the material.
* Never attempt to move or relocate an elevator under any circumstances. Always cut the power to a malfunctioning elevator and secure the power supply. Implement incident risk management and risk assessment. Always have additional trained personnel on hand, and anticipate obstacles and problems. Once the incident has been resolved, leave the power supply off.