

California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection



SHORT HAUL RESCUE

Short haul is an emergency rescue tool meant to quickly get an individual out of a dangerous situation and place them in a safe location. Short haul involves a rescuer being lowered on a rope from a hovering helicopter, to a victim below. After the rescuer rigs a harness to the victim, or if injuries warrant, places the victim in a stokes litter basket, the helicopter lifts both to safety a short distance away.

CAL FIRE initiated a Short Haul Rescue program in 1997 to augment the Department's all-risk emergency response role in California. All CAL FIRE helitack crews (about 180 personnel) completed short haul training by early July 1998.

Short haul training takes approximately 50 hours and combines hands-on and practical exercises with classroom training. Emphasis is placed on the need for teamwork between the pilot, crew chief, rescue supervisor and the rescuer who is lowered to the ground. Safety of the victim, as well as the flight crew, is stressed throughout training. After passing the course, crew members must maintain their rescue certification by demonstrating their skill level every three months.

CAL FIRE crews may only perform short haul rescues during daylight hours, in good visibility, after assessing the risk to the crew and the victim, and when no other timely method of rescue can be performed. The Department established this policy in recognition of the high degree of risk associated with this type of rescue operation.

