



Victim Removal Techniques



STATION 30 PERSONNEL TRAINING ON VEIS TECHNIQUES AT AN ACQUIRED STRUCTURE.

Introduction

What follows is an introduction and primer for victim removal. There are countless ways to package and move victims to egress points, but this document will cover some of the most common and trusted techniques. As mentioned in other sections, no matter what method you choose, it is vitally important to practice. Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Get experience in zero visibility. The only way to learn how to move an unconscious adult is to practice moving an adult that is acting unconscious. Everyone has different levels of strength to weight ratios, but everyone should be able to move a victim as part of a well-trained crew with good technique. This is, after all, why we are here. Finding them is not enough.

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Your crew has put in the practice, you have a plan, your decisive moment has arrived, and you've located a victim. As the crew is preparing to exit, the OIC must determine the route of egress. Often the safest and quickest way is to trace your path back to your ingress point, but sometimes the crew has passed other egress points during their search and those will be better.

Occasionally, it may be better to shelter in place. If a person is trapped in an adjoining apartment, but the environment is clean it may be correct to shelter in place with the victim in the apartment or on the balcony until the fire is completely extinguished. In 2010, MDFR fought an advanced apartment fire at the Melton Apartments which is unsprinklered with enclosed hallways and no standpipe. E-3 was tasked with searching the adjoining apartments where they found multiple victims. The crew gave their face pieces to the civilians and walked them down the smoky hallway to safety. Later, multiple firefighters were hospitalized with smoke inhalation. While the action was heroic, the environment they removed the victims from was clean and the apartment had a balcony that could have been reached by ladders. When there is a safer way, the crew should try to choose the safer way.

The following are some additional thoughts on victim removal:

- The OIC must radio immediately that they have a victim and where they plan to exit so the IC has time to send a unit to receive the victim and take over care.
- Removing victims should be done quickly and by any means necessary without causing further harm to the victim.
- Choosing a window to exit with the victim because it's the closest egress point is often not the right choice. Removing an unconscious adult victim through a window is extremely difficult and the perceived time savings is often lost in the effort expended getting them through the window.
- Required resources (ladders, extra crews, extra equipment, medical etc.) should be determined early and requested from Command.
- A quick search around the victim for additional victims should always be done. Most people fleeing a burning structure will find their loved ones and escape together.
- Having a go-to method for removing victims is great, but knowing multiple techniques makes you more efficient, helping you choose the right technique for the right situation.

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Crew Responsibilities:

A plan for victim removal must be established. Having every crew member understand their role is imperative. This is best determined by the crew during training. Here is a simple plan that your crew can adopt:

- a. One firefighter will quickly assess the victim and determine the best method of removal.
 - b. They'll call out, "I found a victim!" to their crew and make sure the communication loop closes by listening for a response.
 - c. The firefighter will start positioning/packaging the victim for removal.
 - d. The OIC will advise the crew of the plan and egress path.
 - e. Ideally, one firefighter will drag the victim on their own.
 - f. The OIC will radio Command that they have found a victim, along with their plan of removal and required resources.
 - g. The OIC will guide the crew to the egress.
 - h. The second firefighter, keeping one hand on the tank or shoulder of their partner, will guide the dragging firefighter toward the OIC. Stay low if you must.
 - i. The second firefighter will relieve their partner or assist in a two-person drag if requested by their partner.
 - j. If the IC was notified early, a crew should be waiting at your egress point to provide medical assistance; if there isn't anyone there, then it's the search crew's duty to initiate medical care.
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Flipping Victim

When a victim is located, they should immediately be flipped onto their back. Victims are best dragged on their back, which makes your job easier and helps prevent further injury to the victim. This technique is great for large victims and down firefighters.



R17 FIREFIGHTER FLIPPING A VICTIM ONTO HIS BACK. THE BODY FOLLOWS THE HIPS. [PHOTO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

Step by Step:

1. Position yourself at the victim's waist.
2. Stretch the victim's arms over their head.
3. With your hand closest to their feet, reach under the victim's thigh and over their far hamstring.
4. Once your hands are in place, push the victim's torso with your other hand and pull on the victims hamstring, rolling them away you.
5. If the victim is very large or extremely slippery, you can perform a two-person flip. The second rescuer will place themselves at the top of the torso on the same side, putting their outside hand under the victim's arm and over the neck.
6. Coordinate your roll and flip the victim over.

Pivoting Victim



RESCUE 17 FIREFIGHTER PIVOTING A VICTIM AT THE TRAINING CENTER. WHERE THE HIPS GO THE BODY FOLLOWS. [PHOTO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

Pivoting a victim becomes necessary when the search crew is in a tight place, such as in a bathroom, and the victim is not positioned correctly for a drag.

Step by Step:

1. With the victim on their back, lift and hold their legs straight up in the air.
2. Pivot the victim by applying a pulling or pushing motion between their knees and hips.

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Posting Victim



THE TRAINING CAPTAINS DEMONSTRATE HOW TO POST A VICTIM TO GET READY FOR LIFT.

Posting a victim is simply the act of sitting them and holding them in place. The importance of posting a victim is to allow full access to their upper torso. Often this is needed as a step to prepare for a variety of drags.

Step by Step:

1. Place the victim supine with their legs flat in front of them, then move and position yourself at their head.
2. Pull the victim up by the shoulders, neck or arms.
3. By kneeling directly behind them, you can use your body weight to lean against the victim's back, freeing your hands to apply the next technique.

Arm Drag

The Arm Drag is best used to quickly drag victims from tight and/or hostile environments. The Arm Drag is also ideal when the victim's arm or arms are the only accessible limbs. The Arm Drag is not the most ideal drag because it increases the length of the victim profile and making turns and corners is very difficult. The Arm Drag also increases the possibility of further injury at the wrist elbow and shoulder joints when dragging. Additionally, if dragging just one arm, the opposing shoulder becomes a catch point on turns. Because of all these reasons, once the victim has been removed from the tight or confined space, it may be best to stop, pivot the victim, and continue with a more efficient drag.



A DOUBLE C-CLAMP AROUND A WRIST WORKS GREAT TO A GRIP ON A VICTIM'S ARM FOR A QUICK DRAG.

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When:

1. To quickly drag victims from tight and/or hostile environments.

Step by Step:

1. Grip tight around the wrist(s) of the victim and drag the patient to a larger area where you have room to perform a pivot maneuver.

Double Leg Drag

The Double Leg Drag puts the victim in a supine feet-first exit. This is an excellent and preferred drag when searchers can tolerate the heat enough to stand and exit the structure. When done correctly over half of the victim's torso will be off the ground.

When:

- a. Great drag when removing large victims.
- b. Not meant to be performed while going up or down stairs.

Step by Step:

1. While the victim is supine, stand between their legs.
2. Reach under the victim's knees, pull their legs up and rest them on your knees as you stand in a sumo squat position.
3. Reach over the top of the victim's legs and under their knees or thighs. If you're grabbing the victim's calves you're not in the right position. Your wrist should be under the knees or thighs.
4. Pull the victim's weight off the ground as you straighten your back and lock your knees. If you don't lock your back and knees, you'll be dragging the victim's full body weight on the ground, making it much more difficult.
5. The victim's feet should lock under your armpits.



THIS DOUBLE LEG DRAG VIDEO DEMONSTRATES HOW A MUCH LIGHTER RESCUER CAN DRAG A LARGE VICTIM.

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6. Adjust your stands by bringing your feet closer together. Your knees should now act as a fulcrum up against the victim's buttocks, assisting as leverage with the victim's weight.
7. Begin dragging the victim as you walk backwards.

Pros:

- a. Quick and easy grasp on the victim
- b. Multiple friction points around your arms help with slippery victims.
- c. When performed correctly, more than half of the victim's torso will be off the ground, making it ideal for moving larger victims.

Cons:

- a. The victim's head will drag on the floor. If you're going down stairs or have multiple obstacles, this drag may harm the victim more than other drags.
- b. In smoked-out conditions, the rescuer will need to be guided out of the structure.
- c. This drag requires the rescuer to be standing up.

Cross Leg Drag

The Cross Leg Drag allows the rescuer to drag a victim while staying low to the ground. This is an easy and fast drag when the heat forces rescuers down to their knees. The victim must be in (or flipped into) a supine position. This drag should not be used when going up or down stairs.



IN THIS VIDEO, YOU'LL WITNESS A CROSS LEG DRAG, A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUE FOR MAINTAINING A LOW PROFILE CLOSE TO THE GROUND.

Step by Step:

1. With the victim in a supine position, cross their legs by coming over the top with the leg that is farthest from you.
2. Wrap one arm around both legs, similar to a head lock. The rescuer can 'head lock' the legs facing the victim or facing away from the victim. It is easier to drag larger victims sliding backwards by facing the victim.
3. This drag can also be done while on your feet. If you face away from the victim, it provides you with a free hand and the ability to guide yourself out.

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4. Drag the victim toward the egress.
5. If the rescuer needs to stay low, slide backwards; make sure you're leaning back with your tripod hand behind you.

Pros:

- a. Quick and easy grasp on the victim.
- b. Quickest method to drag if you need to stay low to the ground.
- c. While on your feet, this drag provides a free hand and the ability to guide yourself out.

Cons:

- a. Most of the victim's body will drag on the ground, making it more difficult than other drags.

Torso Drag or Lift

The Torso Drag/Lift is the drag you learned in recruit training. It is the same dummy drag you completed if you were hired doing the old CPAT, and it is often the 'go to' drag for many firefighters. The Torso Drag/Lift can be used to get a victim into a window sill and out to a safe environment. Additionally, this drag or lift can be aided by personal webbing, which can make the drag or lift much more manageable. However, the Torso Drag/Lift may not be appropriate for very large victims or for rescuers who do not possess the flexibility or lower body strength to move a victim in this way. Nevertheless, if the rescuer is able to lift the victim in this way, there is no faster way to evacuate a person. Remember, the OIC or partner must guide the rescuer out because their back will be facing the egress.

Step by Step:

1. Position yourself behind the victim and post the victim into a sitting position.
2. Move to a squat while leaning into the victim to maintain them in the upright sitting position.
3. Wrap your arms around the victim's torso like a bear hug. Either interlock your arms or use your right arm to grab the victim's left arm and your left arm to grab their right arm. For victims with large torsos grab left with lift and right with right (Figure 1).



(FIGURE 1) IF YOU'RE UNABLE TO CLASP YOUR ARMS TOGETHER, SECURELY GRIP THE VICTIM'S WRIST TO MAINTAIN A HOLD ON THEM AS YOU REMOVE THEM

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4. Lift the victim off the ground.
5. Lock your back and knees (Figure 2).
6. Either drag the victim backwards or lift them onto the windowsill (Figure 3). If you're planning to lift the victim onto the window, it is imperative to place the victim supine with their feet facing the window and almost touching the wall under the window before you perform the lift.
7. Following the initial lift onto the sill, place a knee between the legs to help to capture your progress (Figure 3).



(FIGURE 2) FOR OPTIMAL EXECUTION OF THIS DRAG, IT IS BEST TO STAND UP STRAIGHT AND LOCK YOUR KNEES, MINIMIZING FRICTION BETWEEN THE VICTIM AND THE FLOOR. ADDITIONALLY, THIS POSTURE ENABLES YOU TO LEVERAGE THE POWER OF YOUR LEGS TO FACILITATE A SMOOTHER AND MORE EFFICIENT DRAG.



(FIGURE 3) ENGINE 30 TRAINING AT AN ACQUIRED STRUCTURE DEMONSTRATES A TORSO LIFT UP TO A WINDOW. THE KNEE BETWEEN THE LEGS HELPS TO CAPTURE YOUR PROGRESS TO READJUST.

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Shoulder Lock Lift



THIS VIDEO SHOWCASES THE EFFECTIVE USE OF A SHOULDER LOCK, WHICH PROVIDES AN EASY AND SECURE HOLD ON THE VICTIM, ENABLING A SMOOTHER LIFTING MOTION TOWARDS THE WINDOWSILL.

The Shoulder Lock Lift is used when lifting a victim into a windowsill. The lift requires a firefighter on each side of the victim and allows the lifting to be shared by two firefighters. However, the downside of the Shoulder Lock Lift is that the space on either side of the window needs to accommodate a firefighter, and as we all know, this may not always be possible. Large pieces of furniture, beds, narrow hallways and small rooms make it very difficult to have two firefighters and a victim abreast of each other for this lift. However, if it's possible, this maneuver *should* be attempted because it will make the lift significantly easier for everyone involved.

Step by Step:

1. If possible, make some room, because this requires a firefighter on each side of the victim. While we normally preach to leave furniture undisturbed during a search, this is a case where you want to move furniture to allow for a successful attempt.

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2. Post up the victim, squat next to them with a knee on their back and your partner will do the same on the other side.
3. Both firefighters will hook the victim's armpit from front to back.
4. Place your arm that is closest to window under the armpit of the victim from front to back and lock your hand on the bicep of your free arm. Take your free hand and grasp the victim's shoulder, creating a figure-4 lock on the victim's shoulder.
5. The key is to keep the victim's arm down, parallel to their body.
6. Stay close to the victim as you lift straight up, keeping your back straight.
7. The victim's elbow should lock against the rescuer's body, not allowing the arms to flare up perpendicular to their body. It should feel as if you're lifting from the armpit and shoulder, not the arm.
8. Once they're up, rest them on the windowsill and capture your progress with a knee between the victim's legs.



PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTERS PRACTICING THE SHOULDER LOCK LIFT ON A VICTIM TWICE THEIR SIZES.

Webbing Girth



THIS VIDEO DEMONSTRATES MULTIPLE VARIATIONS OF DRAGGING AND LIFTING VICTIMS WITH WEBBING. [VIDEO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

The Webbing Girth Hitch and its minor variations is probably the most popular method for capturing, lifting and moving a victim. The webbing girth captured under the armpits of the victim can help move large, sooty and slippery victims. It also allows a rescuer to lift without getting into such a low squat that they cannot lift the victim. Webbing takes up very little space in a rescuer's gear and can be used for a multitude of fire ground tasks. Often, the perceived extra time it takes to girth a victim is made up for in speed and ease of movement once the victim has been captured. The only negative of a webbing girth is that it takes practice.

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Completing the girth in zero visibility with fire gloves on is a perishable skill, but the time taken to master it is worth the repetition and certainly worth the effort.

The webbing girth can be made with a carabiner or just a looped piece of webbing. Most firefighters find that adding the carabiner makes the capture easier.

Step by Step:

1. Post the victim in a sitting position
2. Place your hand through the large loop of your webbing and grab the carabiner with the same hand. You should have the webbing loop draped around your arm and carabiner in that same hand.
3. Bear hug the victim from behind and pass the carabiner into your other hand, passing the webbing under the victim's arms.
4. Behind the victim's back, you'll again exchange the carabiner back into your other hand and pull the carabiner through the loop that was draped around your arm. Creating a girth hitch around the victim's torso.
5. Pull out all the slack and cinch the girth hitch tight up against the victim's armpits. The hitch should sit on the victim's spine.
6. For optimal control of the victim, place your hand under the hitch, cinch it into your hand as tight as possible, and firmly grab the hitch. Lock the hitch by wrapping your hand a couple of times with the excess webbing. This technique will not allow the hitch to cinch too tight, which not only benefits conscious victim's but also prevents the victim from turning into a prone position while you drag them out of the structure. This will also allow you to elevate a significant portion of the victim's body off the ground, reducing friction and facilitating smoother dragging. Remember to engage your core muscles, maintaining a stable back, and utilize the power of your legs to accomplish the dragging process effectively.
7. MDFR Training does not recommend leaving the webbing loose and attempting to drag the victim with a 'length of webbing'. This can be very difficult and takes more effort than other drags.
8. For a window lift, after step 5, instead of wrapping your hand, pass the carabiner back in the direction it came from against the hitch. Give the carabiner to your partner outside the window.
9. You will lift from the webbing on the victims back, as the window rescuer pulls on the excess webbing, assisting you in placing the victim onto the window.
10. Hold your progress during the lift with a knee between the victim's legs.

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Webbing Leg-in Girth

The Webbing Leg-in-Girth adds an extra step but may be necessary when the victim is large and/or when there are many turns that must be managed prior to the egress. Anticipating difficulty with the egress may necessitate the extra time it takes to complete the leg-in-girth. As with the webbing girth, the leg-in requires practice, especially with gloved hands in zero visibility. Additionally, when completed with a carabiner, it can be left in place as a harness. This means if you have to remove your hand for any reason the leg-in girth will stay in place.



THIS VIDEO DEMONSTRATES A LEG-IN GIRTH TECHNIQUE, BEST UTILIZED FOR LARGE VICTIMS AND WHEN ENCOUNTERING OBSTACLES. [VIDEO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

Step by Step:

1. Post the victim.
2. Place a loop of your webbing over the victim's foot and pull it up the victim's leg as far as possible onto the victim's groin.
3. Grab the carabiner and bear hug the victim from behind, pass the carabiner into your other hand, passing the webbing under the victim's arms. But, as you are doing this, you must hold on to the webbing creating two loops that act as the loop of the girth hitch. At this point, you have the following options:
 - You can just hold on to the carabiner with one hand, and the looped sections with the other, as you drag the victim out.
 - Or, you can pass carabineer through the loops and cinch it down as you would in the webbing girth.
 - But, for a more secured drag/lift, complete the following steps:
 - Behind the victims back clip the carabiner on to the loops
 - Pull the carabineer straight up away from the victim, pulling out all the slack.
 - Twist the carabiner multiple times until the whole system is tight and finish by clipping the carabiner back onto the webbing once again to lock it in place.

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Hasty Harness

The Hasty Harness is a great harness to learn, not only for securing a victim, but also for yourself. For a victim, the Hasty Harness is a great option when you need to lower a victim from upper floors. An example is when an exterior ladder is set as a high anchor point for victim removal through a window with a rope. It's also great if you need to remove your pulling hand from the victim at any point during removal. The other hitches require that you 'hog tie' your hand to the hitch, whereas the Hasty Harness creates a tight package with an on the fly 'handle'.

Whether you prepare to use it on a victim or for yourself as an emergency harness for escape, the Hasty Harness is a skill every firefighter should have committed to memory.

Step by Step:

1. Place the victim in a supine position.
2. Place the webbing (MDFR-issued 20' webbing, looped into 10') in a figure 8 across the victim's lower legs with the X between the legs.
3. Place each leg in each loop of the figure 8.
4. Pull on each loop toward the victim's head and slide the X up to the victim's crotch.
5. While still holding onto the loops, place a twist in the loops creating two more figure 8s on each side of the victim.
6. Place each of the victim's arms into the loop that you should still be holding.
7. There should be an X on the victim's crotch and on each side of the victim's torso.
8. While still holding on to the loops, post the victim up and fasten the loops with carabiner behind the victim's neck.
9. Pull up on any slack and twist the carabiner multiple times until you have created a tight harness.
10. Now clip the carabiner back onto the webbing locking it in place. You can use the carabiner as your connection to the victim or you can also drag the victim by the webbing. If you need to let go of the victim to reposition or change rescuers, you can do so without having to 'hog tie' your fist like you would in the webbing girth.



THIS VIDEO DEMONSTRATES A HASTY HARNESS THAT CAN BE QUICKLY PERFORMED AND GIVES YOU THE ABILITY TO LOWER A VICTIM FROM UPPER FLOORS. [VIDEO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

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Up and Down Stairs Carries and Drags

Moving a victim up and down stairs is extremely difficult. Access can only be made at the head or feet of the victim. There is the possibility of not only falling down the stairs but also further injuring the victim's neck and head by not controlling their torso. While Miami-Dade is blessed with a negligible number of basements, there is always the possibility of half basements in certain parts of the county as well as sub-level decks on yachts and large freighters that dock in the Miami River. Therefore, the skill of moving a victim upstairs is important, not only as an individual skill but also as a teamwork exercise, as this task will undoubtedly challenge even the fittest and most experienced crew.

Moving a victim down the stairs is much more likely, as most two-story single family homes have the bedrooms on the upper floor. In most cases, removing the victim down the stairs will still be faster, safer and easier to coordinate than a window removal. Additionally, most stairwells in these homes exit very close to the front door.



THIS VIDEO SHOWCASES MULTIPLE TECHNIQUES FOR HOW TO MOVE A VICTIM UP AND DOWN STAIRS. [VIDEO BY ROBERT HERNANDEZ]

Step by Step - Up the Stairs:

1. Webbing should be placed on the victim using one of the techniques mentioned above. This alone will make the evolution much easier.
2. Get behind the victim (head first up the stairs) and one step at a time lift and pull the victim by the webbing up the steps.

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3. On wide stairwells, two firefighters can stand facing upstairs on each side of the victim and coordinate a two-person lift with the webbing. Coordinating the lift of each step with a "Ready Go" seems to work well.
4. While on narrow stairwells, the second rescuer should get between the victim's legs and lift the hips on the coordinated count. After the victim's rear is resting on the second or third step, the second rescuer should get on their hands and knees and put the victim's legs over their shoulder. The victim's legs should be completely off the ground and resting on the back of the second rescuer. The second rescuer will wrap their arms around the victim's legs and 'roll forward and lift' the victim on the coordinated count.
5. The lift should be coordinated all the way to the top of the stairs. The first rescuer should lift and pull with the hitch, and the second rescuer should lift from below using their whole body to get the victim's hips up and over the next step.
6. Another approach for the rescuer positioned at the legs involves utilizing a girth hitch technique with webbing around the victim's thighs to aid in the lift.

Step by Step - Down the Stairs:

1. Webbing should be placed on the victim using one of the techniques mentioned above. This is important when going down the stairs because it creates a very solid connection point between the rescuer and the victim. The Leg-in Girth is the preferred method.
2. Drag the victim to the head of the stairs head-first. The OIC should place themselves ahead of the rescuer to guide the descent, but more importantly to operate as a 'brake' if the rescuer loses their balance. The OIC can warn the rescuer that they are approaching the return and can give the rescuer confidence to 'lean' into the descent.
3. The rescuer should try and maintain a head up or semi-reclined posture for the victim, allowing the victim to rest against their legs during the descent.
4. The second rescuer will follow and can use their webbing to 'girth' the ankles to lift and act as a secondary brake if the need occurs.

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Ground Ladder Victim Removal



THIS VIDEO DEMONSTRATES TECHNIQUES IN HOW TO MOVE A VICTIM UP TO A WINDOWSILL, TRANSITION ONTO A LADDER AND DOWN THE LADDER.

A ground ladder victim removal is difficult for many reasons. First, it is a taxing evolution to get a victim up to a window sill, but more importantly it must be coordinated with an outside crew. This requires radio communication and foresight. The OIC must recognize early that they want to go out of the window, radio it to the IC and the IC needs to send a crew to receive the victim. Currently at MDFR we do not prioritize outside vent crews so unless a driver who is going 'above and beyond' places a ladder nearby, there *will not* be a ladder waiting for the rescuers. This is a current shortcoming on our department because not only might we need it for rescue, but more importantly we might need it for egress. MDFR has fought multiple fires above ground only to have to back out and reset. Most of these fires did not have a ladder thrown for secondary egress. Great firefighting depends on training, foresight, and redundancy. We *should* throw that ladder on every fire because it won't be the hundred times we didn't need it, but the one where we did that will be crucial.

Step by Step:

1. The rescuers inside will place the victim on the windowsill or balcony railing.
2. The rescuers inside will push the victim head first onto the ladder where the firefighter on the ladder is waiting and dictating the pace and the direction of the victim.

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3. The firefighter on the ladder must guide the victim's arms away from the rungs and guide the victim's head to one side.
4. The firefighter on the ladder will support the victim by keeping his/her hands on the beams of the ladder and the victims' shoulder on their forearm.
5. As the firefighter starts heading down, the victim's legs will come out one at time and the victim will be placed horizontal on to the firefighter on the ladder.
6. The firefighter on the ladder will now place one of their arms in between the victim's legs, place their other arm under the victim's arm pit and hold on to the beams of the ladder.
7. The firefighter on the ladder will announce when they have full control of the victim. Until then the rescuers inside will maintain some support on the victim.
8. As the firefighter brings the victim down in a horizontal position, the victim's head should be slightly higher than their legs.
9. When the firefighter reaches the floor, they will let go of the victim's legs and grab the victim's torso transitioning into a torso drag to remove the victim from the bottom of the ladder.

A Word on Isolating Victims

What should be done when you have a conscious victim in a clean environment? First, it is important to consider whether you have to go through a dirty hallway to remove them or if you can remove them via a window or balcony and protect them from the smoke. Finally, is it ever appropriate to shelter in place with the victim? The answer is yes. The OIC and all the rescuers are equipped with radios and are generally aware of how close crews are to containing and extinguishing the fire. In Miami-Dade County, if crews have announced that they are putting water on the fire and the fire has not overtaken the attic space or cockloft, the fire will generally get put under control shortly thereafter. The safest decision may be to delay removing the victim and sheltering in place with them. It could be that you request a ladder to a balcony or window and not need it by the time it is deployed to you. Removing a conscious victim from a clean environment into an IDLH environment must be done with caution and thought and must clearly judge where MDFR is in the firefight.



THIS VIDEO DEMONSTRATES HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO ISOLATE A VICTIM IN A TENABLE ROOM AND NOT MOVE THEM THROUGH A DIRTY HALLWAY. [VIDEO BY RICK STEPHENS]

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“Heroic” firefighters on our own department have given victims their mask to walk conscious victims from clean balconies, down dirty hallways to ‘rescue’ them only to be hospitalized themselves with smoke inhalation. To add insult to injury, the fire was put under control only a few minutes later. If the crew decides to shelter in place with the victim, the authors of this manual have some advice to guide you in your decision.

1. Notify the IC that you are sheltering in place: “R-6 is sheltering in place in Apt 206 with a conscious victim.”
2. Notify the IC of any needs including a secondary plan for egress. This could be as simple as a ladder to a balcony or another crew coming with a spare pack for the conscious victim.
3. Plan ahead. If sheltering in place doesn’t work, or the course of the fire changes, how will you remove the victim?

In high-rise fires, dispatch often gets calls from all over the building from occupants too scared to evacuate or unable to because they are elderly or handicap. Crews will often be sent to these apartments to check on the occupants. Again, a decision must be made here. Often the correct decision is to shelter in place, but it may not be necessary for the crew to shelter with the occupant if they are remote from the danger. The crew must determine the occupant’s level of anxiety and assure them they are safe and that they should stay in their apartment, but certainly a crew can do more good by helping the firefight than ensuring the occupant stays where they are. Limiting your crew to isolating with one occupant is a disservice to all in need and a handicap to the firefight. Here are some things you can tell the occupant to calm them:

1. Be honest. Tell them where the fire is and where MDFR is in the firefight. Often this will be enough.
2. Tell them your assignment. “I’m here to check on the occupants of the eighth and ninth floor. I have to calm your neighbors and tell them to stay in their apartments, but I won’t be far.”
3. Tell them you’ll be back to tell them when it’s safe—and come back. Don’t leave it to another crew.

Often this will be enough; however, sometimes the occupant is very scared and you’ll have to spend more time reassuring them. It may cross your mind to split up your crew and leave a member with the occupant. Resist this urge and maintain crew continuity. This is not the time to break that rule.

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