

## The Caterpillar Walkout

If an obstacle is encountered that cannot be easily stepped or climbed over, a caterpillar operation may be employed to pass a litter over, around, or through the obstacle. The basic technique is to place the rescuers in stable positions, free of slip and trip hazards, and pass the litter from one rescuer to the other, moving the litter and victim independently from the rescuers. As attendants become available, they rotate ahead of the litter to continue the process.

### **Key Points**

- Attendants must maintain secure footing.
- Do not pass litter until sufficient attendants are available.
- Rotate additional team members ahead of litter to maintain fluid movement of litter.
- Communicate ground conditions and hazards to team members.

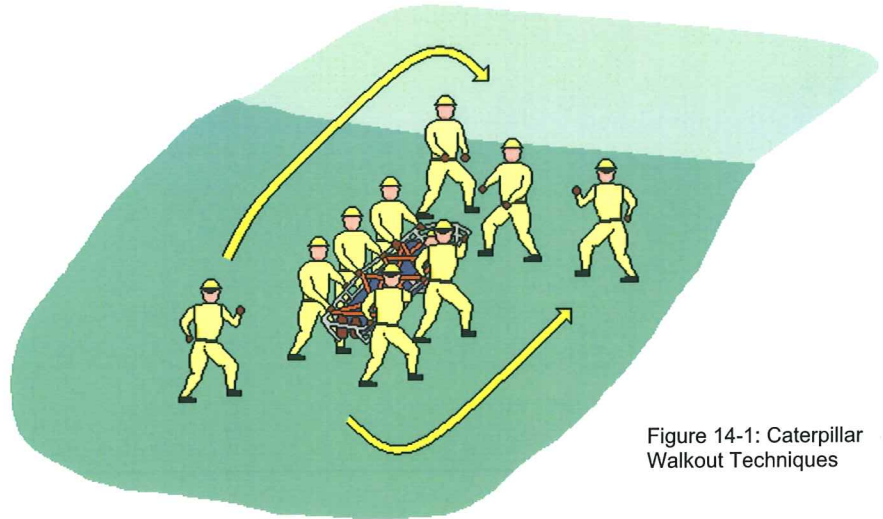


Figure 14-1: Caterpillar Walkout Techniques

## The Single Pitch Walkout with a Belay/Safety Line

If terrain or obstacles are encountered that would allow the litter to slide or fall, a belay/safety line should be incorporated into the walkout system. Belay/safety lines, as a single line system, may be used in some of the following terrain situations:

- Side-hill trails.
- Short, slick sections of terrain.
- Icy driveway or section of road.
- Lifting or traversing over large obstacles.

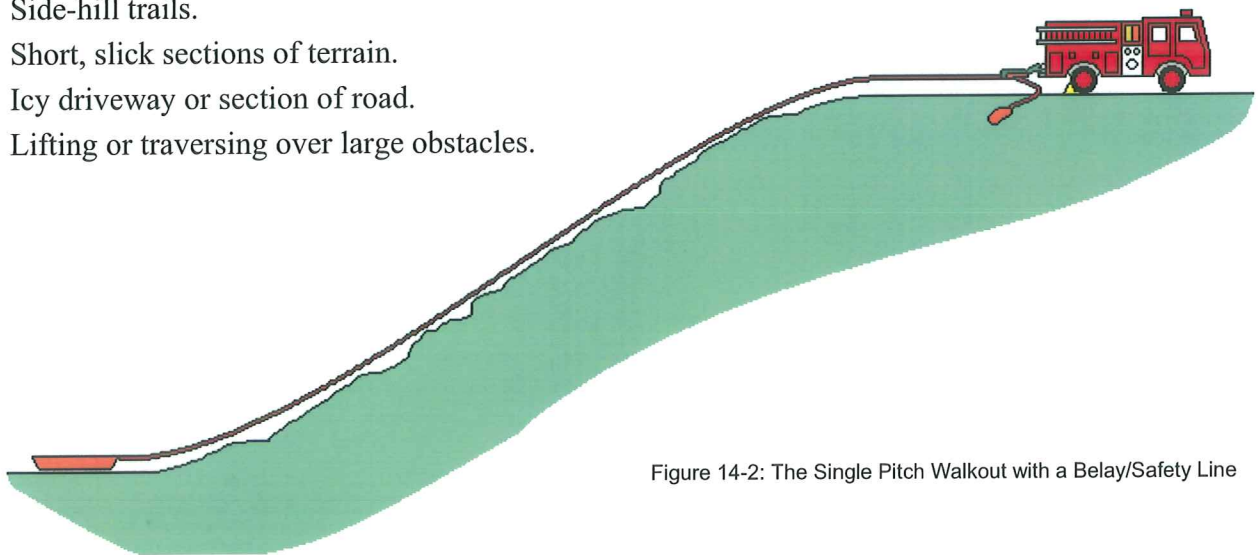


Figure 14-2: The Single Pitch Walkout with a Belay/Safety Line

## Key Points

- Used with both simple walkout and caterpillar operations.
- The belay/safety line is for the litter only.
- If the belay/safety line begins to support the rescuer's weight or haul the litter, then setup either for a two line low angle rope system or find a new route.
- The length of the walkout will not exceed the length of the belay/safety line.

## The Multiple Pitch Walkout with a Belay/Safety Line

Often an uphill, downhill, or traversing litter walkout can be broken down into short sections called pitches. This breakdown gives the rescue team a way in which to plan regular rests and patient reassessments. Often, belay/safety lines will be utilized if the litter walkout has been organized into pitches. A pitch's length will depend on several variables:

- Pitches should start and end at natural flat rest spots along the trail if possible.
- Pitches should be organized to provide rests for litter team before and after strenuous sections of trail.
- If a belay/safety line is used, pitches will be determined by rope length and anchor availability.

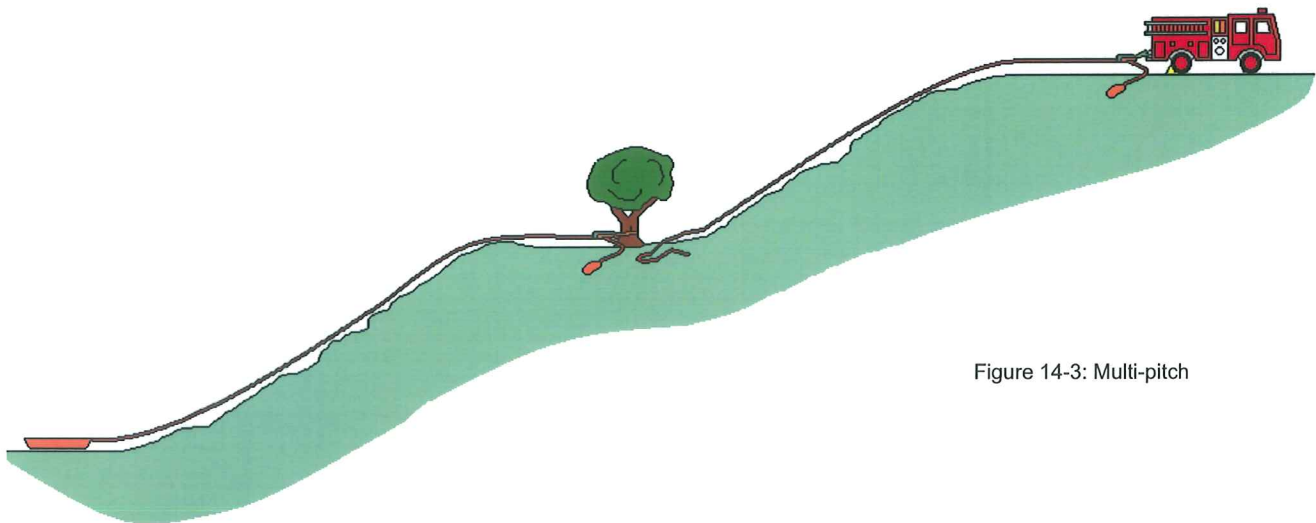


Figure 14-3: Multi-pitch

## Key Points

- Attach new belay/safety line before disconnecting previous line.
- Use change over location to check victim.
- Use change over location to rest and rotate rescuers.

## Staffing

There are four basic positions to be filled by litter team members during litter walkout operations.

## Litter Team Positions

- Litter Team Leader.
  - Controls motion of litter.
  - Rotates and rests team members to prevent fatigue.
  - Assigns team members to support positions.
- Scout.
  - Must have good overall understanding of operation and route selection
  - Identifies trail or route for team to follow.
  - Identifies hazards and obstacles, and routes around if possible.
  - Request debris removal from trails if needed.
  - Advises if belay/safety or other method will be needed.
  - Acts as safety for team.
  - Directly determines effectiveness of the operation.
- Litter Attendants.
  - Carry litter (provide propulsion to nonambulatory victim litter system).
  - Maneuver litter around/over obstacles.
  - Number of attendants is determined by:
    - Victim weight.
    - Terrain variations.
    - Distance of carryout.
- Victim Attendant.
  - Responsible for victim care and safety.

During litter walkouts, enough team members should be assigned as litter attendants to provide a stable platform for the litter without crowding each other. The terrain, victim weight, and duration of carryout will determine how many team members are required to efficiently move the litter. Four to six is best for most litters. There may be times that fewer are required because of ease of travel or the narrowness of an obstacle or trail, if so rotate members more often. Additional members should be available to rotate through the litter on carries of longer duration.

In situations that are more complex, additional positions will be assigned.

- Riggers.
  - Identifies belay/safety anchor.
  - Sets up belay/safety line anchor.
  - Sets up belay/safety line.
  - Responsible for needed equipment.

- Belay/Safety Line Attendant.
  - Tends belay/safety line.
  - Position can be filled by Rigger.
- Additional team members.
  - Carry additional gear and equipment.
  - Relieve other Litter Attendants.
  - Be ready to assist with maneuvering litter over/around obstacles.

## **Ladders used in Litter Walkouts**

Ladders are often used in litter walkouts. When used in this fashion, the ladder is used to distribute the weight of the litter to more rescuers. It also provides the ability for the litter team to more easily negotiate small spans, changes in elevation, and uneven terrain. A more complete description of ladders used in low angle rescue situations can be found in Chapter 15.