

Self-Chair Evacuation

Self-chair evacuation is just that, safely getting yourself out of any chairlift. This self-evacuation is an important component in ski patrolling and needs to be maintained at a high level of proficiency. The method that we use is to rappel from the chair to the ground with equipment that we carry with us at all times. This equipment consists of the following items:

- 1) One 50-meter rope that is 5mm to 7mm in diameter. The rope should be a kernmantle rope purchased from a climbing store or your patrol director. The diameter of the rope that you purchase will be determined by your body weight.
- 2) Two standard rock climbing locking carabiners.
- 3) One rappelling device of your choice – ATC, figure 8 with ears, skid plate.
- 4) One piece of one-inch tubular webbing 8 to 12 feet long tied together with a water knot. This is for your rappel sling.
- 5) Two pieces of 2mm to 3mm perlon cord that is four feet long, each is tied together with a fisherman knot forming two prussicking loops

Self-chair evacuation is a learned skill that needs to be practiced until one becomes very comfortable with it. It helps to have a practiced routine so that your proficiency level is high. The following is one routine that may help in achieving this level:

- 1) Never self-chair evac unless you have been told to do so by whomever is in charge of the ski patrol that day.
- 2) Drop your ski poles off to the side so that they are out of the way.
- 3) Remain relaxed as you remove your equipment from its storage area, being careful not to drop anything. As you remove your equipment place your rappel sling and prussicking loops over your shoulder, clipping your two carabiners and rappel device to the prussicking loops.
- 4) Take your rappelling rope and loop it over the section of the chair cable attachment called the hanger arm. This is on the right side of the chair running up to the cable. Take care to make sure that the rope does not run over any sharp edges. Also make sure that both ends of the rope reach the ground. If they do not you will need to tie the rope to the taco and rappel on a single rope.
- 5) Put your rappel sling on by passing it under both legs and behind your back. Pick up a loop of webbing between the legs and one on each hip. Clip one of the locking carabiners through all three of the webbing loops.
- 6) Attach the rappel device to the rappel ropes by folding it and passing the folded ropes through the large end of the figure 8 and then over the small end. Take the second locking carabiner and clip it through the small end of the figure 8. Then clip this carabiner to the one already clipped to the rappel sling. If you are using a tuber or a rappel plate the same procedure is followed. Fold the rappel ropes and pass the folded ropes through the small end of the tuber to the large end of the tuber. Clip the second locking carabiner through the folded ropes that were passed through the tuber and then clip this carabiner to the one on the rappel sling. Do the same with the rappel plate.
- 7) Take all of the slack out of the rappel rope by pulling up on the rope below the rappel device. Once this is done get a good grip on the rappel rope and pull down on it. Now slowly slide yourself over the edge of the chair with the side of the body holding the rope away from the chair. This will allow you to use your free hand to guide yourself over the edge of the chair.
- 8) Slowly rappel down, remembering that you are using a small diameter rope that cannot take a lot of abuse, so go as smoothly as possible.
- 9) Once you are on the ground unclip the rappel device and pull your rappel rope down. Return it to its storage area. If you cannot remove your rappel rope you will need to contact the lift operator and tell him the number of the chair that the rope is on.

If for some reason the rappel device becomes stuck while you are rappelling, you will need to use your prussicking loops. Place the prussicking loop on the rappelling rope by rapping it around the rappel rope and through itself twice. Place your feet in the prussicking loops then stand up. This will allow will you to unweight the stuck rappel device and loosen it.