Self- Rescue

Self-rescue is a technique used to relieve tension on the rappel system. It can be used to disengage a safety prusik, or tend to/correct any other equipment in the rappel system that may be jammed, locked, or otherwise fouled. The only additional component required for self-rescue beyond the rappel system discussed above is a foot loop. The foot loop consists of a long piece of 7mm cord tied to the rappel line with a prusik knot. The rescuer can stand in the loop of the prusik cord to transfer weight off of a loaded safety prusik, or other equipment having issues.

Technique for unlocking a safety prusik:

- Lock off the rappel device being used for rappel so both of the rescuer’s hands are free (Figure 3).
- Tie a long prusik cord to the rappel line to be used as a foot loop using a prusik knot. The foot loop should be tied to the rappel line in such a location that it will be out of the way of the locked safety prusik or other equipment that needs to be addressed (Figure 3). It may be tied above or below the rappel device as appropriate for the situation.
- Place the rescuer’s foot into the prusik loop like a stirrup.
- Transfer weight to the foot in the loop and stand up on it to relieve tension on the safety prusik (Figure 4).
- Unlock the safety prusik and slide it down to a position where there will no longer be any tension on it (Figure 4).
- Gradually transfer weight off of the foot loop and re-load the rappel device. At this point the rappel device should remain locked off.
- Untie the foot loop and secure it.
- Unlock the rappel device and continue descent.
- Don’t forget to tend the safety prusik.

Figure 3 – Safety prusik has become locked. The rappel device has been locked off and a foot loop has been tied to the rappel line.

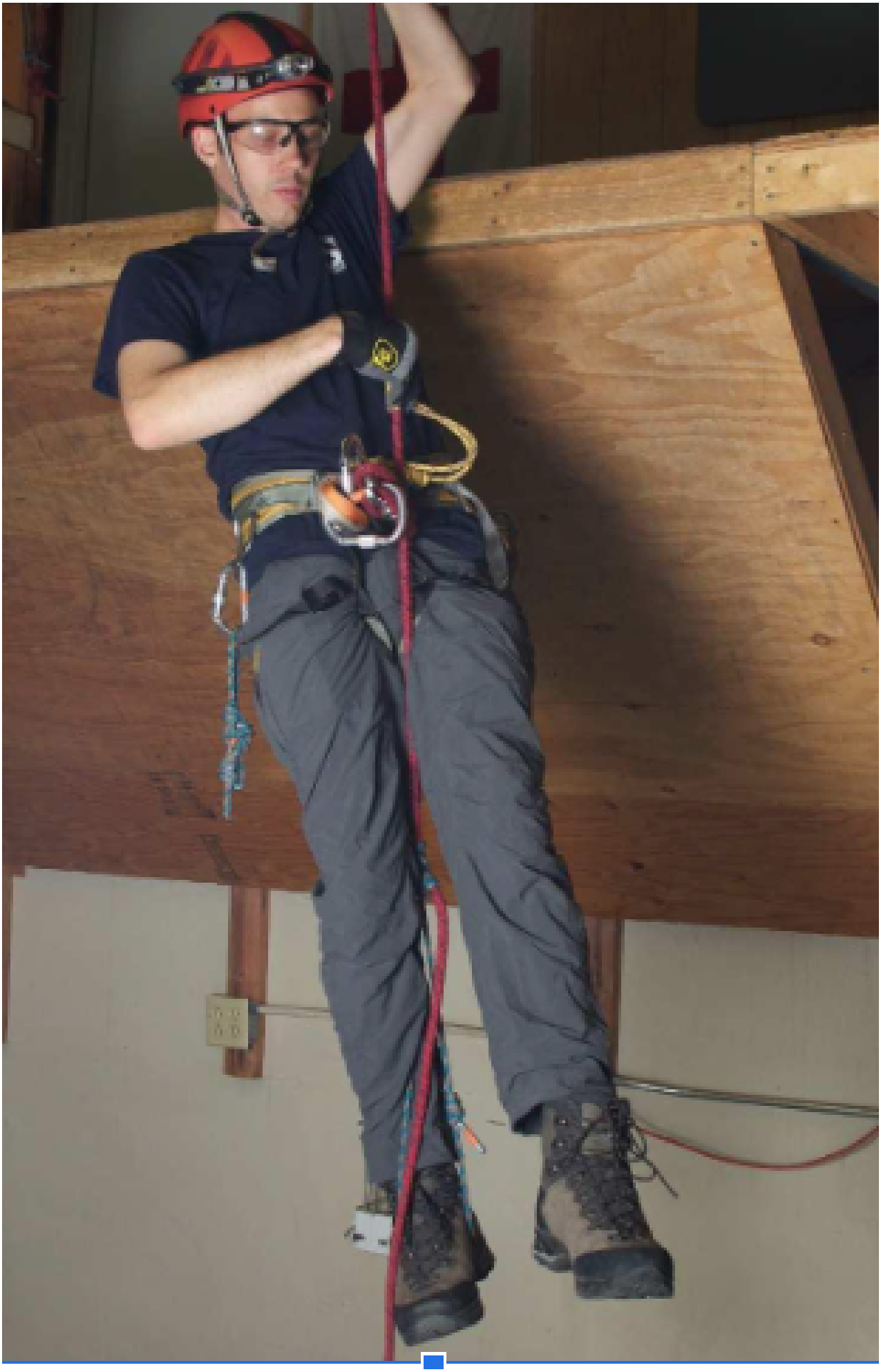

Figure 4 – Weight is transferred to the foot loop in order to release tension on the safety prusik. The safety prusik can then be released.