

# Uncoiling Rescue Rope

by Jim Thoen

When a customer orders a length of rope less than 600', it almost always comes in a coil. When the length of rope is cut, it is coiled by being fed from a big spool straight onto a smaller spool, cut to length, and then taken off the smaller spool from the side. When it's placed in service, rescue rope is almost always stored in a rope bag, into which it is stuffed 6-12" at a time without any kinks. In between those two stages is the process of uncoiling the rope once it's received from the vendor and taking the kinks out. Depending on how it's done, this can be a frustrating and laborious process. The good news is, it doesn't have to be.

When I first took over this responsibility at our department, I would usually wait for a nice sunny day, go outside, uncoil the rope by taking one coil at a time off the right side of the coil, carefully dropping it into a "bird's nest", (an organized pile in which the rope feeds off the top), and stretch the new rope out in a straight line on the ground. I'd spend the next 20-30 minutes untwisting it to get the kinks and twists out before stuffing it into the rope bag. Sometimes I'd have to repeat the process. One time I missed lunch because of this, so I decided there had to be a better way. I'd follow the same process the next time, but this time I'd be really, really careful that I slowly, methodically pulled the wraps off the right side of the coil and really, really carefully piled the rope in another bird's nest. But much to my chagrin, I still ended up with kinks in the rope when I stretched it out. At one point I noticed that there were almost as many kinks or twists in the rope as there were wraps that came off the coil. After losing several nights' sleep over this dilemma, I came up with a solution.

The next time I received rope in a coil, instead of pulling all of the coils off the right side (or left side for that matter), I alternated pulling the wraps off opposite sides. First one off the right side, then one off the left. I still dropped the rope into a bird's nest, but low and behold, NO KINKS OR TWISTS! I didn't have to stretch the line out on the ground any more either. I could actually go from the birds nest directly into the rope bag. It didn't take long to realize that if one wrap off each side worked, two or three at a time off each side would work to. There was the occasional twist, but the right-handed twists were offset by the left-handed twists, and the end result was that the rope was stored torsionally balanced, and I got to keep my job!