An Illustration of Crevasse Rescue

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Rope up for glacier travel

For a rope-team of 3 climbers, divide the rope into 4 lengths, with both end climbers carrying at least 1/4 of the rope (aka rescue rope). Either carry the rescue rope in the backpack or coil it on the shoulder.

- Rescue rope kiwi coiled over the shoulder
- Rescue rope to be stacked inside the backpack (not drawn)
Hold the fall

- Travelling with a minimum of slack between climbers is the first step to being able to hold a crevasse fall.
- Should a fall occur, lean back or fall away from the fallen climber. Make the rope tight between rope-mates.
Communicate with and approach the middle climber

- End climber slowly gets up while middle climber holds the weight of the fallen climber. This requires careful coordination and communication between the two climbers.
- Approach middle climber carefully while probing for crevasses and use a friction knot to minimize the slack.
- Be ready to arrest again should the middle climber slip.
Build the anchor

- Build a solid snow anchor while supporting middle climber.
- Examples of a solid anchor include T-slot and deadman. Equalize multiple anchor points if necessary.
- Connect the rope going to the fallen climber to the anchor using a friction hitch or rope grab.
Backup the friction hitch

- Transfer weight from the middle climber to the anchor by slowly getting up.
- Backup the friction hitch by tying off the loaded rope directly to the anchor.

* middle (blue) climber omitted for simplicity
Communicate with the fallen climber

- Safely approach the crevasse by self belaying off the anchor.
- Communicate with the fallen climber and assess the situation.
If immediate first aid is needed, rappel down to the fallen climber.
Direct pull

Before rigging a complex raise system, consider easier alternatives, such as direct pull, if the terrain is mellow and the fallen climber is able to help.
Ascend the rope

- Another alternative, given the fallen climber is not injured, is to ascend the rope using Texas prussiks.
- Make sure to backup the prussiks after ascending every few feet. It can be a clove hitch, overhand, figure 8, etc.
Drop-loop C-pulley

- If everything else fails, set up a raise system with mechanical advantage, such as 2:1 C-pulley system.
- This may require extra rope. This is where the rescue rope comes into play.
- Prepare the crevasse lip with a smooth object (e.g. shaft of an ice ax) to prevent the rope from getting entrenched.
Assisted pull

- Be careful! Should the fallen climber be jammed up while being raised, it would be easy to injure them with the mechanical advantage.
- If possible have one person stationed and safely anchored near the crevasse, where he/she can communicate with and monitor the fallen climber during the raise.
- To avoid dropping the fallen climber and shock loading the anchor, a progress capturing device should be employed. This can be ① a friction hitch on the pulling strand, ② the friction hitch already on the original strand going to the fallen climber, or ③ a ratchet on the pulley. In the first two cases, someone needs to tend the friction hitch. In the last case, some pulleys are self-tending but still should be attended to to avoid jamming. If the fallen climber is seriously injured, avoid this option.