



# **CMC Rescue Technical Report #2**

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## **DECONTAMINATING ROPE AND WEB**

For many years, the manufacturers of life safety ropes have recommended the use of a cleaning product designed for life safety ropes, such as LifeLine Cleaner, or a mild soap that is safe for nylon products, for example Woolite. Harnesses and web products are also made of nylon and the same washing considerations would apply to those products as well.

With the increasing concern for personal safety when dealing with bloodborne pathogens, a procedure was needed to decontaminate rope and harnesses that was not in conflict with safe washing of these products. For an answer, we contacted the engineering staff at Wellington Commercial Cordage.

Rope that has come into contact with blood or other body fluids can be cleaned using chlorine bleach per your department's protocols for decontaminating equipment. Wellington said that the small amount of bleach specified in most decontamination protocols would have minimal effect on the rope's fibers. This would hold true for harnesses and other web products although some minor discoloration may occur.

A further study was conducted by the CMC Rescue School staff as part of a presentation at the 2001 International Technical Rescue Symposium. The effect of a variety of contaminants on kernmantle rescue rope was evaluated. We found that chlorine bleach, when used in a 10% solution, caused a 2% loss of strength. For occasional decontamination, this is probably insignificant. Repeated use may cause a more significant loss of performance in the rope.

Use of stronger solutions is not recommended and this was supported by the 14 percent strength loss when the samples were exposed to a 100 percent concentration. In both cases, the samples were immersed for 10 minutes, rinsed for ten minutes, and then tested 14 days later.

For further information on CMC Rescue products, please call 800-235-5741 or 805-562-9120.

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