

Tuesday 5 June, 2018

RE: Updated advice on high ropes course recommendations from QORF.

Dear Outdoors NSW Members,

Last Monday we alerted you to a high ropes incident that occurred in Queensland and included an extract of a statement that the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) issued to their members. We have heard from a number of members who were appreciative of the letter and the opportunity to consider their current high ropes operations and practices. We are pleased to report that the young man is now resting at home and making a strong recovery.

QORF has shared their most recent email to members. We provide an extract below:

Last week QORF engaged an independent expert who has provided generalized advice regarding safety lanyards in self-belay systems. This advice stems from last week's incident which led to the entrapment and subsequent unconsciousness of the participant using self-belay systems, specifically twin safety lanyards, on a continuous challenge ropes course. Please find this advice below regarding operation of a self-belay system with two safety lanyards:

In order to reopen your course for operation in line with the recommendation to temporarily stop use, the advice is that you complete a process to prove your system is safe in the light of this incident. If you are running a self-belay system with two safety lanyards:

- *Common practice is to leave both lanyards attached to your critical line during progress across an element.*
- *In the event of a fall you must ensure that only one lanyard is loaded, the second lanyard should remain attached but loose.*
- *There should be sufficient gap between the two lanyards when loaded to ensure entrapment and pressure on the neck and/or head between the lanyards does not occur.*
- *Each leg of the twin lanyard arrangement should not be made from a loop of material; rather it should be constructed from a single strand of material.*
- *Suitable materials for lanyard construction would include rated flat webbing, rated tubular webbing or static or dynamic rope of suitable diameters.*

It should be noted the advice provided can only be general. Each operator must satisfy themselves that any changes to their system, whether they align with this advice or not, have been subjected to normal risk assessment processes of the operator and, in the light of the issue, the risk control adopted is better in terms of mitigating risks of any system each operator formerly used.

Further, QORF recommends that members ensure that:

- 1) comprehensive and documented risk management procedures related to this change are communicated to staff,
- 2) that operating procedures comply with Australian Standard AS2361.2.2:2016 and,
- 3) that they align with the Queensland Adventure Activity Standard for Challenge Ropes Courses (while observing the Department of Education's Curriculum Activity Risk Assessment where applicable).*

**If your ropes course is in NSW please replace 3) with the NSW Adventure Activity Standards for Challenge Ropes Course and the Department of Education Sport Safety guidelines for Ropes Courses apply.*

Outdoors NSW supports QORF's advice and organisations are encouraged to review the findings and make adjustments to their practice as relevant to their individual circumstances.

This is an opportune time to remind you about UPLOADS - a custom designed incident reporting and analysis system which enables Australian Led Outdoor Activity organisations to report and analyse incidents. UPLOADS provides us with an opportunity to share and report information about incidents and near misses in the outdoors. It enables us to identify and understand contributing factors of incidents, and the development of interventions to prevent future incidents.

Outdoors NSW is committed to supporting our members by providing updates on issues that we believe may impact you, your organization, your clients and the outdoor community at large. We thank you for taking a moment to allow us to keep you up to date on current issues.

Sincerely,



Martin Burney
President Outdoors NSW