

CLIMBERS' CORNER

Single Rope Work Positioning

The official position of the ITCC Committees

Mark Bridge, ITCC Head Technician on behalf of the ITCC Committees

Recently, single line work positioning techniques have attracted a lot of attention at trade shows and industry events, and they have been widely discussed in online forums and at climbers' meetings. What is single line work positioning, what are the implications for the wider industry, and what is the International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC) Committees' position regarding its competition use?

Traditionally, a doubled running line has been used in tree care for work positioning, offering a range of advantages, such as constant mechanical advantage incorporated into the climbing system or the fact that the adjuster is only loaded with half the climber's body weight. These systems use either friction hitches or mechanical devices as an adjuster.

So what is single line work positioning? Single rope systems consist of a single, fixed line on which mechanical devices are used as adjusters. Such techniques have been used for many years in alpine, industrial rope access, or caving situations. They have become an increasingly familiar sight in tree work when used as ascent systems. These techniques demand of the climber a higher degree of climber competence due to its increased complexity, but can offer an efficient, ergonomic alternative to the traditional footlock technique.

The following statement was issued prior to this year's ITCC in Parramatta, Australia, in the name of the ITCC Technical Advisory Committee, in an attempt to clarify the committee's position on whether the use of single rope techniques for work positioning were viewed as acceptable for competition use:

RE: SRT Climbing Systems

In an effort to clear up some confusion in regard to the "SRT climbing systems" we wanted to provide an update.

Currently, there are no approved SRT climbing systems. Concerns are in regard to the incorrect use of individual components as well as poor overall configurations of components within these systems.

To date, no SRT climbing system has been submitted to ITCC for use at this year's event.

Regrettably, rather than clarifying the joint position of the ITCC committees regarding this issue, the statement created further confusion. This was partly due to the fact that the statement did not differentiate between single line ascent and single line work positioning systems. This is important, as they represent two distinctly different situations.

The ITCC committees have allowed single line ascent systems in the Aerial Rescue event or for the Masters' Challenge for many years. So far, the Footlock event has been run using the secured footlock technique only, but in recognition of changes within the climbing industry, an Alternative Ascent event has been showcased at the past ITCC, last year's ETCC, and run as an open event at this year's ETCC in Vienna, Austria. The proposed format allows the full range of ascent techniques and configurations to be used. In the context of ascent, single line techniques are undisputed, and the ITCC is evolving to embrace this fact.

Single line work positioning is a different matter. This issue has been discussed at length by ITCC Operations, Rules, and Technical Advisory Committees, as well as having been raised during the Climbers' Meeting in Parramatta following the ITCC.

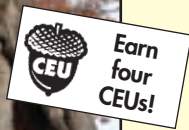
Single line work positioning has been used for years for other types of work at height environments. Many of these techniques have a good track record and are perfectly safe to use. The step from doubled running rope to a single fixed line does, however, represent a major shift in techniques used in tree climbing. The ITCC committees are working toward



a full understanding of the implications of this step. This is especially important as the approval of a given technique for a tree

climbing championship is frequently viewed as an endorsement for its introduction to the wider tree climbing industry. In the coming months, we will be talking to manufacturers of tools used for single line work positioning, reviewing the test criteria to which these tools conform, and considering whether they are applicable for use in our industry. It is extremely positive to witness an evolution in the way we access and work in tree canopies. But in the event such far-reaching changes should occur, the implications should be well understood. The way to ensure this is to adhere to a diligent review process rather than to rush into something headlong without being in possession of all the facts on which to base decisions.

Consider this the other way around: Imagine turning up to an industrial rope access event and proposing to run the event on a doubled running rope system. This likely would not be permitted. This is not what is happening in this case. The ITCC Committees' mission is, among other tasks, to offer a platform for presenting new techniques and tools that in turn help the wider industry to evolve. But it is important for this to happen in a safe and coordinated fashion, which is exactly what the ITCC committees are working toward with their review of fixed single line work positioning techniques and tools. **AN**



Introduction to Arboriculture: Risk Assessment & Tree Protection CD

#CD1015

Retail Price: \$69.95

ISA Member Price: \$59.95



Order online at www.isa-arbor.com
or call toll free: 1-888-ISA-TREE

PRODUCT RECALL

Herbicide

In the August 2011 issue of *Arborist News*, ISA reported that DuPont cautioned the public with the use of Imprelis® herbicide near white pine (*Pinus strobus*) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) trees because of cited tree damage. DuPont attempted to investigate each case with herbicide damage that may have been related to Imprelis.

As of August 4, 2011, DuPont implemented a voluntary suspension of Imprelis herbicide. A product return and refund program was initiated in the middle of August. DuPont made this decision after ongoing discussions with, and in response to, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Michael McDermott, Global Business Leader for DuPont, stated in a letter to turf management product distributors that the company would work with all customers to promptly and fairly resolve problems connected to Imprelis. For the complete letter, and for more information from DuPont, visit the company online (www.imprel-is-facts.com).

Safety Lanyards & Belay Devices

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission has announced a recall of thousands of safety lanyards and belay devices due to fall hazard.

The lanyards voluntarily recalled include Scorpio and Absorbica shock absorbing lanyards. According to the issued report, some lanyards are missing a safety stitch on the attachment loop, which may cause the lanyard to disconnect from the climbing harness (posing a significant fall hazard). The lanyards were imported and sold by Petzl America, Inc. (Clearfield, UT); they were manufactured in France. The recall affects approximately 375,000 units worldwide.

The Safety Commission has additionally noted that this recall affects all Scorpio and Absorbica lanyards manufactured before May 2011. Authorized Petzl dealers in the U.S. and Canada sold both Scorpio and Absorbica lanyards from January 2002 through May 2011 for USD \$75 to \$220. This includes Scorpio lanyards manufactured between 2002 and 2005, and with model numbers L60 and L60 CK. Affected Scorpio lanyards manufactured between 2005 and 2011 are model numbers L60 2, L60 2CK, L60 H, and L60 WL. Absorbica comes in several models with several varying lanyard configurations and connector options. Affected model numbers are L70150 I, L70150 IM, L70150 Y, L70150 YM, L57, L58, L58 MGO, L59, and L59 MGO.

In a separate, voluntary recall, Petzl also announced the recall of the GRIGRI 2 belay device (with assisted braking) due to fall hazard. According to the U.S. CPSC, "Excessive force on the handle can cause it to become stuck in the open position. When stuck open, the assisted braking function is disabled, posing a fall hazard to consumers." Like the lanyards, the belay devices were imported and sold by Petzl, and manufactured in France. The recall affects approximately 18,000 units in the United States and an additional 2,000 units in Canada.

The GRIGRI 2 device is used primarily by rock climbers, often to maintain control while being lowered on the rope. The first five digits of the serial numbers of belay devices affected by this recall range from 10326 to 11136.

Regarding the lanyard recall, no injuries were reported in the United States; one fall injury was reported in France. Regarding the belay device recall, no injuries have been reported. However, seven devices, at the time of recall, were reportedly returned after users noticed that the handle could become stuck in the open position.

For more information about these product recalls, including physical descriptions and photos of the affected products, please visit the U.S. CPSC website (www.cpsc.gov) and search for the recall release by number (lanyards: #11-276; belay devices: #11-314). To contact Petzl, visit them online (at www.petzl.com).