

Riggingcall #1

A new feature looking at things (impartially, of course) from a rigging point of view.

News

Kurt McLaughlin, the tour rigger who took a 6m fall from the pool cover at Earls Court during a mark-out for a Madonna show in August, is back in the US and reportedly set to make a full recovery. Our best wishes to him.

Equipment News

Roundslings and UV: Rigging Call has received enquires recently about the effect of UV on roundslings. There is plenty of evidence that UV degrades polyester, and emerging study suggests even the UV content of artificial light has an effect.

The HSE has recently published guidance (INDG 367) because of the effect UV can have on harnesses and lanyards. This guidance is predominantly aimed at users such as contractors in the construction industry, who by and large use the equipment outdoors in harsh conditions. Don't confuse polyester webbing in PPE (harnesses, lanyards, etc) certain ropes or webbing slings with roundslings. These are affected over time; they are not usually 'sheathed' like a roundsling. Five years is generally considered a life expectancy by many PPE manufacturers.

Polyester fibres exposed to UV radiation will be considerably weakened over time. Many manufacturers use dyes and coatings to help protect their products and issue guidance on their expected lifetimes.

Roundslings used indoors in our industry are highly unlikely to have the inner load-bearing fibres exposed to UV during their lifetime. The outer sheath protects them from UV as well as cutting and abrasion; if the sheath is damaged and the inner yarn exposed, the sling should be removed from service and destroyed in any case. It is possible that slings left outdoors in strong sunlight for long periods of time (years) would be affected. Under normal circumstances in the UK roundslings will not be affected. Indoors in most venues even artificial light is unlikely to be a problem, although lighting left on for long periods may eventually have an effect. A roundsling left under a 5kW for a month?

If you use roundslings in an application where you feel there may be a UV exposure problem, speak to the manufacturer and get advice from your insurance company. If you

have any doubts, speak to the manufacturers of your slings and in the meantime, use a steel instead.

Work at Height PPE: From Singing Rock harnesses of Czechoslovakia, Rigging Call particularly liked the 'Profi Worker' style which is an EN361 harness (can be used for fall arrest). Amongst other nifty design features it has a rear extension lanyard allowing users to easily attach inertia reel block hooks to the dorsal attachment without pulling any muscles. Anything that helps people use the PPE provided is a good thing.

The Frog: Another neat product, which was shown at PLASA 2004 by Rope Assemblies who import the product from Italy. This quick-release connector can be used one-handed to connect to a variety of anchor points up to 11mm diameter and is intended as an alternative to karabiners. The device conforms to EN362 and having a breaking load of 22kN presumably if used with an energy absorber and suitable anchors, it may be suitable for use with some fall arrest equipment in some situations. For work positioning it could be invaluable. A word of caution, though - even though it will fit, don't ever attach it to a diagonal brace in a lightweight truss!

Neat new products from Petzl: The long-awaited ASAP from Petzl will be with us soon. The ASAP is an automatic device that follows the worker up and down vertical or inclined fall arrest ropes. Should the worker fall or even abseil too fast, the device locks and will arrest the fall. This is exactly what the industry needs to replace existing rope 'chucks' that bite the rope and are prone to slipping. The ASAP uses a revolving toothed wheel to grip the rope and appears virtually foolproof to use. Some training in use is essential, as is the case for all Category 3 PPE. Rigging Call believes it surprisingly inexpensive for what it can do.

Freino karabiner: Another item of interest, this is an autolocking offset D karabiner to EN362, but it has a cunning extra. There is a hook with a spring latch forged into the backbone which is specifically designed to allow an abseil line to be trained over it from a descender, creating extra friction for use when lowering heavy loads in a rescue situation, or in a situation where extra friction is required.

The traditional methods of taking the line back through another karabiner are gone. If you use a Stop or I'D, the Freino will be very useful. There are also new helmets and accessories - more in future.

Standards News

The Work at Height Regulations (see L&SI June 2004) are supposed to be coming into force in early 2005. This has been put off before, but HSE staff have been heard to say that early 2005 is the most likely date. There has been plenty of press and discussion about the Regulations, not least PLASA's seminars during the year: if you have not yet started to gear up your systems of work and equipment inventory, now may be a good time!

The other significant news is that British Standard 7906: Part 1 will be published in the New Year. Snappily titled: '*Use of lifting equipment for performance, broadcast and similar applications: Code of Practice for installation, use and removal of above stage equipment*' - excluding trusses and towers (these are covered by BS 7906-2:2000, *Lifting equipment for performance, broadcast and similar applications - Part 2: Code of practice for use of aluminium and steel trusses and towers.*)

The title says it all. It should be useful in all areas of the industry, including exhibition and conference production as well as theatre and arena rigging. There is guidance on safety factors, planning and equipment specification that follows on from BS7905: Part 1 which deals with the design and manufacture of the equipment we use.

If you are a rigger, freelance or in a company, you will need access to this Standard.

Finally, as reported in Standards News in July BSEN13411 is a new standard which removes any doubt over how many dogs you need in a wire rope eye, what type to use and how they should be fitted. The Standard, which is in five parts covering thimbles, dogs, splicing, wedge sockets, ferrules and socketing, replaces DIN 1142 as best practice.

Feedback, comments and views to riggingcall@isionline.co.uk

Next time:

STAC, testing and overhead working . . .

go digital with  **Lighting & Sound**