Info Log – 05.08.2011

Re: Accident on a Zip Wire

The Issue

A local authority has recently been investigating an accident where an 11 year old boy fell from a zip wire at a local attraction. The local authority in question has requested that the following information is disseminated to hopefully prevent a similar occurrence. The wording is therefore mostly theirs.

During their investigation it came to light that the accident was probably caused because of the client being ‘mis-clipped’ onto the zip wire. This took place because the company taped up the tail end of the ‘lanyard’ rope back onto the main ‘lanyard’ to make the ends neat and tidy.

The Outcome

The zip wire operated a system whereby 3 ‘lanyards’ were connected to the trolley that rides the wire, using a single karabiner. The other end of one of these 3 ‘lanyards’, depending on the rider’s height was attached via a karabiner to the harness of the rider. This single karabiner would be moved to the approximate length lanyard for that particular rider.

The fixing point for the karabiner is a loop resulting from the use of a figure of eight knot. A loose tail results from the formation of the knot (figure 1). The company taped up this tail end back onto the main ‘lanyard’ rope to make the ends neat and tidy (figure 2).

In this instance, taping up the end resulted in a false loop developing during use (figure 3). This false loop could be confused for the actual connecting loop made using a figure of eight knot. This actual loop is used to clip the harnessed person onto a zip wire or similar rope course attachment. However, in this case, the false loop was used.

This is an on-going investigation but the local authority has asked for this information to be shared to bring this practice to the attention of the sector and hopefully prevent another accident.
The False loop, achieved by taping the loose end of a rope or lanyard.