

Professional Ropes Course Association (PRCA)

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SAFETY ALERT – Steel Lobster Claw Auto Locking Snap Hooks ERCA 3/2008

PRCA Safety Alert / Technical Advisory Committee: - Safety Alert ERCA 3/2008

The purpose of the PRCA safety alerts and technical advisories is to disseminate current and recently acquired information to the industry which will aid in the prevention of accidents on ropes courses. Where possible the PRCA will provide unbiased information related to the sequence of events, materials involved and root causes of accidents or near misses. When possible the PRCA Safety Alert / Technical Advisory Committee will make appropriate contacts as necessary but the committee does not intend to perform in depth investigations into incidents, we rely upon the information provided by our members, members of the industry and other industry associations, such as the European Ropes Course Association.

Please forward any questions or comments about this safety alert / technical advisory to info@prcainfo.org

Steel Lobster Claw Auto-Locking Snap Hooks Safety Alert/Technical Advisory

In March of 2008 the European Ropes Course Association issued an advisory regarding steel lobster claw carabiner – safety hooks. Although there were no reports of injuries associated with the advisory it did bring to light a growing problem in our industry. There have been growing reports of lobster claw style auto locking snap hooks of the type illustrated having malfunctions of the locking mechanism (sticking or breakage) after a relatively short period of use on ropes courses. These snap hooks are typically designed and tested in accordance with applicable general and construction fall protection standards. The ERCA Safety Commission report cites that of the malfunctioning snap hooks returned to distributors two thirds could be returned and reused safely after proper cleaning and maintenance, the balance had to be replaced.



The Problem: The standard fall protection items for construction and general industry are intended for an average of 4 to 10 openings/closings per day, and typically do not incur repeated fall arrest or body weight support situations. The increased usage that results on a ropes course application requires a like increase in standard maintenance, and inspections. Two thirds of the returned units did not have proper maintenance performed which resulted in the locking mechanism failures. The other units were not built for our uses.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Lobster Claw style auto locking snap hooks: (applies to all fall protection connectors)

- Must be suitable and fit for the intended use on the ropes course. Some manufacturers are now taking our uses into consideration and designing / approving their products for our uses.
- Lobster claw snap hooks should be inspected and maintained regularly and in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. The more usage the more frequent the inspection and maintenance

- Lobster claw snap hooks for fall protection in the United States purchased after 11/2008 MUST have a gate strength of 3,600 lbs to comply with the ANSI Z 359 2008 Fall Protection Codes.

The full text of the ERCA advisory is available as a download or may be viewed at:

<http://www.erca.cc/cms.php?id=732&lng=english>