

Recommended BCA Guidelines for Technical Experts



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Who should be a Technical Expert?

1. For Caves – a CIC holder
2. For Mines – a CIC + Mines module holder or Mine Leader for the region
3. A Trainer/Assessor for the LCMLA Scheme is desirable if providers are requiring their staff to attain Awards or 'Certificates of Competence'/Site Specific sign off.

Self Protection

- A. Set up a dated and date limited contract/formal agreement stating what you are offering. Only work within the remit of the agreement and your qualification and experience.
- B. Keep yourself aware of what the provider is doing – normally this would require at least an annual visit to check operating systems, staff qualifications/experience, equipment, and venues being used. Make it clear if you are unhappy about anything the provider is doing.
- C. Always keep copies of conversations, phone calls, emails, letters etc. For a verbal conversation, precis as a letter or email and be sure the provider confirms their understanding.
- D. Get appropriate insurance and set a reasonable fee for the work done.

The Role of the Technical Expert

- E. The role of the Tech Expert needs to be appropriate to the provider's undertakings.
- F. What a Tech Expert has to do depends on the experience and requirements of the organisation i.e. an established OEC going underground for 20+ years with LCMLA staff may require less than a new venture with inexperienced staff.
- G. The responsibility for the activity **always** rests with the provider – make sure this is clear! Traditionally the role has been that of advisor – a Tech Expert cannot be held responsible for advice not carried out.

Responsibilities

- H. Keep yourself up to date with current best practice, LCMLA and CIC schemes, equipment, venues, conservation and access arrangements as appropriate.
- I. Be prepared to answer occasional questions through the period of the contract/agreement.
- J. Give good advice – refer the question to someone with greater expertise if you cannot answer.

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- K. Consider using the visit in B to give a good service – include staff training/workshops, induction to new venues or staff monitoring as appropriate.
- L. Provide links with LCMLA Training and Assessment.
- M. Remember you have a 'duty of care' to deal with any unsafe practice that you see or become aware of.
- N. Offer links to Mine Inspections and Radon reports if appropriate.
- O. Be prepared to coordinate information regarding changing hazards and access between providers.

In – house qualification / 'Certificates of Competence'

Clearly there is a role for in-house assessment by technical experts. The aim of this section is to provide some guidance, and specifically avoid the risk of an insufficiently trained or experienced instructor working a venue, leading to a serious incident. Certificates of Competence should be issued with the following guidelines in mind

- P. Attention is drawn to paragraph 27 and 28, pages 10 and 11 of the HSE [Guidance from the Licensing Authority](#).
- Q. Different regulations exist for those working in mines from those working in caves. Due to H & S and mines legislation the leader is seen as in an 'at work' situation. The meeting at Bootle 1993 between the Mines Inspectorate and the then NCA states that leaders should be LCMLA qualified. AALS (HSE) has accepted a sensible 'signing – off' approach with conditions and time limits.
- R. When technical experts provide in-house training or assessment, they are wholly responsible for ensuring that the process is appropriate to the risks presented by the venue, balanced against the experience and training of the candidate. Where candidates are looking for lots of sites, and/or complex sites, it may be more appropriate to guide the candidate towards the BCA's Award Scheme.
- S. Technical experts need to satisfy themselves that instructors are clearly aware of the limitations of their statement of competence. It is very important that candidates and providers have a credible plan B, whereby an alternative activity can be used if, for example, the weather makes the usual cave/mine venue too hazardous.
- T. Technical experts are advised to consider whether the site-specific arrangement might normally apply to a specific provider, rather than being a 'portable' statement which can be used by an instructor with multiple providers.
- U. It is advised that statements of competence are made based on the technical expert personally conducting the assessment.

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- V. The technical expert will need to create with the provider a training and assessment process appropriate to the venues used and the level of experience of the proposed instructor. Many skills are transferable, reducing the need for substantial training when a proposed instructor is highly experienced in a parallel field. The statement of competence should include a written description of
- the training and assessment process involved
 - list of agreed venues and/or routes
 - reference to the provider's operating procedures and risk assessments for the activity / venue
 - any limitations being imposed, for example when a venue might become inappropriate due to severe weather conditions
- W. There is a need for instructors to remain current and competent. The technical expert will need to agree with the provider a process for ongoing training, technical update and review, all appropriate to the challenges presented by the venues chosen.