

## **Use of new technical equipment designed for rope access work by cave/ mine leaders.**

Increasingly manufactures are releasing a range of technical equipment designed for those working within the rope access industry in mind, which may appeal to cave/ mine leaders. For those working as cave or mine leaders it's important to recognise that all technical equipment should be used in-line with manufactures guidance, and with due consideration to the often more extreme wet and dirty environment found within caves and mines.

As an example, it's becoming increasingly common to see cave/ mine explorers making use of adjustable or stitched lanyards to replace cowstails.

It is important that as Trainer/Assessors we have a consistent message on both training and assessment courses. This statement aims to help in ensuring that consistency.

Traditional cowstails are constructed from dynamic rope and typically tied with a central figure of eight knot and barrel knots to secure an appropriate carabiner. Cowstails constructed this way are in line with the testing criteria for a [dynamic rope](#), have been tested by the [Ecole Francaise de Speleologie](#), and have a proven track record in use. A common theme is that adjustable lanyards may not be designed for use in a situation where a fall factor greater than 1 could take place. It is accepted that although not ideal, 'normal' caver made cowstails with dynamic rope and knots may withstand a fall factor higher than 1 (although this should be avoided by caver positioning). As such adjustable or stitched lanyards may or may not be appropriate for use within the context of a cave/ mine leader.

According to manufacturer's user instructions, many (but not all) of the currently available stitched or adjustable lanyards are not designed for use as cowstails, rather as positioning lanyards where a potential fall factor is limited.

To use them as cowstails means that should a caver stray above a traverse line the lanyards would be used outside of the manufactures guidance, and so would be questioned as poor use of equipment, and possibly dangerous.

On training participants should be advised not to use adjustable or stitched lanyards as main cowstails unless the manufacture specifically approves their use in this context.

On assessment if a candidate does use stitched or adjustable lanyards as their main cowstails, they must not put themselves in a position of fall factor 1 or above, fully understand the limitations of their use, and the Trainer/ Assessor be sufficiently familiar with that particular type of lanyards potential limitations.

Pete Knight has pulled together a useful document with information about lanyards that are currently on the market and will shortly be releasing a blog post on his website which may further support trainer/ assessors and award holders:

<https://www.peakinstruction.com/blog/underground-specialist/blog-posts/>

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