



# Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) Update Number 27 June 2006

## Introduction

In update 26 we noted that;

*“all adventure activity providers using ropes and harnesses (commercial and non commercial) have been on tender hooks since news was circulated that the Victorian Workcover Authority (VWA) had successfully convicted a high ropes constructor, supplier and trainer for providing a rock climbing harness in a situation where the participants could invert (intentionally or otherwise).*

*As there is always some risk of inversion when hanging from a rope in a climbing harness, implications seemed frightening for all rope based activities. The VWA have been very accommodating in their response to our concerns. A meeting was held on April 5<sup>th</sup> and several outcomes were agreed that reflect a great deal of understanding and commitment from the VWA.”*

Please read the following joint correspondence from the ORC – Victoria - Inc (ORC) and the Victorian Workcover Authority (VWA). It is hoped that this provides some clarification of the current and potential future developments.

*Please pass this report on to all members, staff, committee members or individuals who you believe will have an interest in the continued development of the Victorian AAS.*

---

Dear industry stakeholders;

On Wednesday the 05th April 06 the ORC, accompanied by the Australian Camps Association and Christian Camping International (Australia) met with Directors of the Victorian Workcover Authority in relation to industry wide confusion in the aftermath of the recent court cases.

The following has been agreed by the ORC and VWA as being the key outcomes. This is intended to alleviate some concerns, however many of the issues being discussed will be addressed in future meetings.

### Key meeting outcomes

The ORC and the VWA have made a commitment to work towards establishing clarity in the following areas;

- Clarifying requirements for work positioning system or fall arrest system for a range of recreation based activities,
- The VWA as per it's Compliance and Enforcement policy, will provide guidance and advice on how to control risks associated with adventurous activities.
- Assisting with identifying the risks associated with various types of harness during inversion (deliberate and/or accidental).
- The VWA will provide industry groups with opportunities to be consulted to ensure that existing guidance material and state of knowledge is effectively communicated amongst the various stakeholder groups.

### The current situation

The VWA are currently interested in activities involving giant swings, leap of faith & flying foxes. These activities have been identified by VWA in response to recent incidents (Not random targeting). It should be noted that VWA inspectors are finding practices that they believe to be unsafe, often known to be contrary to existing accepted industry practice.

There is limited data for industry or VWA to make informed decisions regarding suitable harnesses and/or the risks of inversion. This is one of the factors that lead the VWA towards manufacturer's specifications and other standards; in this case, compiling enough information and state of knowledge parameters to bring about charges against Outdoor Initiatives.

The VWA will be continuing their inspections. However, until further notice the main focus will be upon the following

aspects of these activity types;

- The connection system between the harness and the activity (Belay/wire ropeway). This has been the component that has failed in all identified incidents.
- Adherence to comprehensive operating procedures; particularly around supervision. Clearly this is always a crucial aspect of adventurous activities.

If operating an activity where inversion is a deliberate part of the activity; a sit harness (work positioning harness) should not be used in isolation (without chest/shoulder straps)

Where a sit harness is used for an activity other than that which it is designed for (eg rock climbing, abseiling), operating procedures must be carefully followed and it must be fitted correctly and tested for correct fit immediately prior to use. We expect that a better description of acceptable harnesses will be developed once data is available from manufacturers testing.

[Note: (a) Use of 'sit harness only' configurations is restricted to a fall of 600 mm or less.  
(b) Use of a sit harness compared to a full body harness should be addressed through a hazard identification risk assessment process]

#### Definitions

Fall arrest harness – a single assembly of interconnected shoulder and leg straps which may incorporate a body belt of other horizontal straps designed to provide as large a bearing area as possible on the body and to prevent the wearer falling out of the harness during a fall.

Work positioning (sit) harness – an assembly of an adjustable waist strap or body belt connected to a pair of leg loops by means of front straps, and other straps such as a sitting strap which passes under the pelvis so as to support the lower part of the body in a sitting position.

(Definitions from Australian/New Zealand Standard. AS1891.1 – 1995)

Gordon Duff  
Development Manager  
The Outdoor Recreation Centre Inc.

Eren Moustafa  
Manager – Public Safety Program  
Victorian Workcover Authority

----- list for any reason please reply to this email with **“Please remove me from your list”** in the subject line.

**Adventure Activity Standards Contact details**

AAS Project Manager  
Outdoor Recreation Centre Inc.  
332 Banyule Road  
View Bank  
Vic 3084

Ph. (03) 9457 5432  
Fax. (03) 9457 5438  
Email [gordon@orc.org.au](mailto:gordon@orc.org.au) or [info@orc.org.au](mailto:info@orc.org.au)  
Web [www.orc.org.au](http://www.orc.org.au)

The Outdoor Recreation Centre encourages the development of the Outdoor Recreation industry in Victoria through communication, networking and representation.

NOTE: This e-mail and any attachment to it is intended solely for the abovementioned recipient. Any of them may contain confidential or privileged information. If you have received this e-mail and/or any attachment in error, please notify us immediately by telephone or email and delete all of them. You must not copy, distribute, disclose or take any action in reliance on this e-mail or any attachment to it. The contents of an attachment to this e-mail may contain software viruses which could damage your own computer system. The ORC has taken reasonable precaution to minimize this risk, yet we cannot accept liability for any damage which you sustain as a result of software viruses. You should carry out your own virus checks before opening any attachment to this e-mail.