



Club Equipment Club Guidelines

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Club Equipment

1. Introduction

This document summarises the main points covered during the 2008 Student Safety & Good Practice Seminar. It will be useful to anyone who uses or is responsible for pooled or club equipment. Some key points have been highlighted by case studies.

2. Pooled Equipment

The following advice is taken from the general guidance given to clubs by the BMC:

- **Pooled equipment is used at the individuals own risk**

The individual should check to make sure any pooled equipment that they borrow is safe to use and is appropriate for its intended purpose. Check it before you use it.

This is fine if club members are experienced, but what if they aren't? Provide training to your club members to allow them to check their equipment confidently. We'll look at some of the resources available that can help you do this later.

- **It is recommended that records of age and usage of pooled equipment are kept, and any inspections are recorded**

It's relatively easy to monitor your own personal equipment, and to build up a picture of its use and history. From this you can decide when to retire it from service.

It isn't such an easy task when dealing with pooled equipment used by a wide range of individuals. Good record keeping helps keep track of usage and history, and enables information to be passed on. This is especially important for student clubs in which the membership can change almost completely over a three or four year cycle.

3. The Equipment Officer

- **A club has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that equipment is reasonably safe for the use of the club members**

In addition to the individual checking equipment prior to using it, appointing a suitably experienced person as an Equipment Officer can greatly assist the management of equipment in order to achieve this.

If responsibility is shared between club members and an Equipment Officer, the chances of unsafe or unsuitable equipment being used are greatly reduced.

The equipment officer should not be responsible for tasks such as ensuring that all kit is fit for purpose, or logging in/out each piece of equipment, or cleaning dirty kit. All of those are the responsibility of the user. However, running 'equipment inspection classes' for all club members, ensuring that kit is stored by the club appropriately and managing the club's kit inspection records would likely be included in the equipment officers responsibilities.

For all BMC Affiliated clubs, Club Officers including Equipment Officers are covered under the BMC civil liability insurance policy whilst discharging their duties.

4. Equipment Checking

Inspecting and checking equipment is our main method in avoiding incidents caused by faulty equipment. We can break this down into two types of checking:

- **Pre-use check by the user**

This goes back to shared responsibility, in which the user must check that equipment is safe to use before using it. This advice and training should be given to novices and new club members.

A typical pre-use procedure would be doing a quick visual and tactile check of a rope when flaking it out at the base of a route.

Case study – several brand new ropes were issued by the club equipment officer for a beginner's meet in the Peak District. All the ropes had been thoroughly checked by her beforehand. On arrival at the crag, top ropes were set up. Whilst doing this, one of the climbers noticed a massive lump in one of the ropes – the core visibly poking out. The new rope had been shut in the minibus door, neatly cutting it almost clean through. Luckily, a pre-use check found the damage and an accident was avoided.

- **Thorough detailed check by a responsible person**

We'll refer to this type of detailed check as Equipment Inspection, and cover it in some detail below:

5. Equipment Inspection

Why Inspect?

- To help meet the club's duty of care.
- To assist with budgeting and purchasing – you can avoid buying kit which hasn't lasted for very long, and keep track of when replacements may be required.
- Have the confidence to enjoy your climbing without having to worry whether your kit is up to scratch or not.

When to Inspect?

- Immediately after purchase - even new equipment may be faulty.



Case study - harness with a fault from new. The harness was used for some time before the fault was found. An initial inspection would most likely have spotted this.

- At regular intervals based on the manufacturers guidance. This will vary depending on the manufacturer, and the specific product. For example, from the Wild Country website:

“In addition to the normal inspection required before use this product should be thoroughly examined at least once every THREE MONTHS by a competent person.”

Also, be prepared to shorten inspection intervals if necessary, based on circumstances.

- After a reported incident. If a rope gets handed in with the comment in the signing out book “ 40 ft fall factor 1 at Gogarth, after block pulled out”... there is a chance the rope may be damaged and requires inspecting!

How to Inspect?

- Be systematic. Do one thing at a time, for example if checking a harness, check the webbing, then the stitching, then any buckles.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions. There may be specific points to check for instance, that are more critical than others.

PETZL CONNECTOR

Visual check of the body, of the hook or nose of the connector, of the closing gate, of the rivet and of the sleeve

On the connector, look for any cracks, marks: look for the cause; sharp tools, impacts... This analysis will provide information on the history of the product. Check that the connector is free from deformation, wear.

For a connector, a wear mark more than 1 mm deep is serious. Beware there is no trace of corrosion which may be present on the body.

Pay particular attention to the angles, to the hook and to the gate. Check that the rivet and the sleeve are present and check their condition.

- Record the results. If you don't record the results, you may as well not bother doing the inspection in the first place.

Who Inspects?

- Involve as many club members as possible. This will increase individual's knowledge and awareness, and help foster a good attitude towards kit maintenance and care.
- Have one experienced person managing the system. In other words, an Equipment Officer, who doesn't get lumbered with all the work!

Inspection Records

It's up to you whether you keep the records of any inspections separate or include them as part of your signing in/out book. Keeping them separate tends to make it easier to manage as signing in/out is often done in a hurry and records can get a bit scruffy! Blank record sheets are included at the back of this document, but feel free to make your own to fit the management system you use. Here's an example of a rope log where inspections and signing in/out have been combined:

Rope #	Description	DOM	In Service	Retire By	
4	Red/Blue 8.5mm x 50m Mammut	10/2005	06/2006	06/2011	SCRAPPED
Comments					
*Undamaged section of 35m retained, used as scranbling rope. See Rope #12					
Log Out	Signed	Log In	Signed	Usage	Inspection/Comment
12/06/2006	A.G	12/06/2006	A.G	Inspection	Pre-service inspection. Fine, correct length
21/07/2006	D.M	23/08/2006	D.M	Alps Trip. 6 routes.	Slight furring of sheath 4m in
25/09/2006	A.G	27/09/2006	A.G	Beginners Meet, Peak District. 12 routes	Fine
05/10/2006	D.M	07/10/2006	D.M	Lake District, 4 routes	Fine
15/01/2007	J.P	17/01/2007	J.P	Cairngorms, Winter climbing 1 route	10m fall, ~ FF 0.5 Lump noticed in rope afterwards.
18/01/2007	A.G	18/01/2007	A.G	Inspection	Core damaged 15m from end. Rope retired from use *

6. Retiring Equipment

At some point you will have to retire kit from service. This is easy if it has been damaged – you can see that it is unsafe to use, and you then scrap it. What about lifetime? All equipment has a lifetime, given by the manufacturer, after which it should be scrapped, even if it seems to still be OK. The rules for this are simple:

- Follow the manufacturer's guidelines.
- If possible, record the end of service date on the equipment log (see the rope log above).
- Make sure items are identifiable.
- Write down that you've scrapped it, and actually dispose of it so it can't get back into the system.

What if, as sometimes happens, you inherit a load of kit which you can't identify or tell how old it is? This is a tough one. However, the club can take a pragmatic approach in assessing the kit. For example, all modern equipment is date and batch marked, so the year of manufacture can be established. That alone is important knowledge. If nothing about the kit can be established then it may be best not to use it. To avoid these situations arising in the first place, maintain comprehensive equipment records and pass them on to the next Equipment Officer.

Case study 1 – a bag of karabiners is found at the back of the club store room, there are no records for them. An inspection shows that they are all in a good condition and appear almost unused, and they pass an inspection. Phoning the manufacturer with the batch code indicates they are 7 years old, and the manufacturer gives an indefinite lifespan for their metallic products. It is decided to use the karabiners, as they are within their lifespan and there is no reason to suggest that they are unsafe to use.

Case study 2 – a new Equipment Officer is going through the club harnesses, and finds one with no records to go with it. There is no CE label or date marking, and the harness is well used but still passes an inspection – it is decided to scrap the harness because there is no way of working out its age. Textile items generally age and degrade over time more than metallic items.

7. Quarantining Kit

A system that works really well is having a quarantine box. This enables suspect kit to be taken out of service temporarily until it can be thoroughly inspected. Make sure everyone knows about it, and try to foster an attitude where people aren't afraid to report damaged kit and related problems. There's nothing worse than when people try and sneak knackered kit back in because they are afraid of being told off.

8. Choosing Club Equipment

Choose your kit with care, and look for the following features:

- **Hard wearing, durable**
- **Large safety reserves**
- **Easy for novices to use**

Some ideas:

Single ropes: 10.5mm, rather than 9.1mm diameter.

Double ropes: 9mm rather than 8mm diameter.

Fully adjustable harnesses.

Rigid shell helmets rather than lightweight foam.

16mm Nylon slings rather than 6mm Dyneema.

If you intend to do top-roping, low-stretch rigging ropes and steel karabiners are useful.

Grabby belay devices for novices rather than slick devices.

9. Storing Equipment

Some tips

- Put away dry, clean, away from light and chemicals (especially acids).
- Lightly oil moving parts, wiping away excess. Normal oil does not affect nylon.
- Been seacliff climbing? Rinse equipment in cold water and allow to dry.
- Use ropebags and clean ropes with a ropebrush.

10. Further Information

There is a wealth of useful information available to help you.

There are BMC publications including:

Care & Maintenance: available as a free download from the BMC website
www.thebmc.co.uk>equipment advice>downloads>care & maintenance booklet

Crampons & Ice Axes Booklet: available to buy from the BMC shop

Manufacturer's websites: obtaining copies of instructions and general advice

Useful inspection videos on the Petzl website:
en.petzl.com>sport>equipment inspection>checking of ppe

