



First publication June 2012

GOOD PRACTICE NOTE

ROPE ACCESS CHAMBER

Lead Climbing

Lead climbing is an advanced technical skill used in rope access. Although it forms part of the skills of a rope access level 2 practitioner, it is highly recommended that a rope access level 3 supervisor is involved.

The following basic guidelines apply when considering lead climbing as a rope access technique.

1. Basics

- 1.1. Consider alternative access techniques. (Would any other rope access techniques or non-rope access techniques achieve the same objective?)
- 1.2. Assess the objective and task specific hazards and risks. Complete a thorough risk analysis and ensure all hazards and risks are controlled effectively.

2. Consider:

- 2.1. What are the qualifications and experience of the people involved?
- 2.2. How many people are in the team?
- 2.3. What are the implications (e.g. ground/structure strike, rope abrasion/contact with sharp edges, etc.) of the leader falling at any point during the technique?
- 2.4. How would a fast and effective rescue be implemented, in case of an emergency?
- 2.5. How would communication be effected between the leader and the belayer/s?
- 2.6. Is the correct equipment (for example dynamic ropes) available for lead climbing techniques?
- 2.7. How can the fall factor be kept to a minimum and managed effectively during the placement of the first (few) running anchors?

3. Choose suitable devices:

- 3.1. Choose suitable equipment, based on and defined in your risk assessment. For belaying the lead climber, will you use a backup device and descender device or two descender devices? Consider 2.4 above.

4. Choose suitable anchors:

- 4.1. Do not anchor the belay equipment on a belayer's harness (as is done in recreational climbing). Rather select planned or suitable self-identified anchors for work at height and justify or describe the use thereof in your risk assessment. Similarly, the lead climber must carefully select suitable anchor points as running belays.

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| Authorised by: CEO | Created date: AUG 2017 | Doc: IWH-GPNR0003 Version: Rev 1 | Review date: AUG 2018 |
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