

**The British Caving Association
Minutes of the Equipment and Techniques Committee**

BCA Equipment and Techniques Committee Meeting 10th October 2009

Response to CSCC's Paper of Concerns

E&T comments in red

**CSCC's Response to the Permanent Resin Bonded Anchors – Installation
Procedure, Training & Documentation Issue 4**

We believe these issues have been previously raised with the E&T Committee by our Rep. However, as requested by the E&T Committee, we now present them formally in this document. We trust that they will not be dismissed as trivial and that they will be given their due consideration.

Item A

The Installation Procedure, Training & Documentation (IPTD) is only available to those who have completed the training course. [E&T Minutes 8/11/08, Action 7]. This was relaxed slightly by the Acting E&T Chairman to include Officers of the National Council. [BCA Minutes 20/6/09, 10.1].

Despite this relaxation most of the CSCC Officers and Club Reps. are still prevented from viewing the IPTD and are therefore excluded from the consultation process.

The CSCC believes that access to any BCA document should be un-restricted unless good reason can be shown to restrict it. If it is to be restricted then the permission of the National Council should be required.

In this case there are no commercial interests that need protecting.

The more open the E&T Committee is with information, the better the scheme will be. It will benefit from public scrutiny.

1. The CSCC requests that the IPTD is made available to all and a copy is put on the BCA website.

The E&T Committee are not prepared to authorise wider publication of the IPDT because;

- The committee are concerned that wider publication of the document could lead to an increase in the installation of unofficial anchors and lead to BCA losing control of the bolting programme. Resin bonded anchors are already being installed unofficially (and badly) by persons unknown, the committee believe wider publication could lead to a proliferation of unofficial anchors.
- The IPDT is a training manual given to anchor installers upon successful anchor installation training (volunteers who have given up their spare time to be trained on behalf of all UK cavers). The E&T committee believe that wider publication of the IPDT would devalue that training.

Item B

A document called "BCA's Permanent Resin Anchor Scheme" (PRAS) has been circulated for consultation. It is a brief summary of the IPTD.

The CSCC believes this document is superfluous and would be unnecessary if the IPTD was available. The IPTD is the document that should be circulated for consultation.

The IPTDv4 was approved on the 23 March 2009 by the E&T Committee and used as the basis of the Training Course on the 6th June 2009 despite unanswered concerns raised by the CSCC Rep. Chief amongst his concerns was that it hadn't been circulated to him!

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2. Will the E&T Committee restart the consultation process and make the IPTD the focus of that consultation?

No.

- The IPTD review process has taken almost 3 years to reach the current version and the E&T Committee are confident that it (the IPTD) meets all requirements expected of it.
- Both DCA and CNCC have formally accepted the document. Whilst DCUC and CCC are yet to formally accept it, their representatives have been part of the process that has agreed the IPTD.
- The E&T Committee are frustrated that just one Regional Caving Council are stalling this process
- The E&T Committee note that all of CSCC's concerns are about the "housekeeping" of the IPDT and that none of their concerns are about the actual installation techniques.

Item C

IPTD 10.1 says "Further assessments must be made by the trainer ..." with no detail.

3. What further assessments must be made?

The E&T Committee have agreed to amend the wording of the final sentence in 10.1 to:

"These skills must be assessed by the trainer during anchor installation training which may be suspended if this competence falls into doubt."

Item D

IPTD 7.4 says that following a failure, a programme of testing of anchors with the same batch numbers must be instigated.

Does "testing" mean a pull test with a Hydrajaws puller? It was this requirement that lead to several Mendip caves being unnecessarily closed when an anchor was believed to have failed in Rhino.

4. Given the statement at IPTD 8 shouldn't the word "testing" should be replaced with "inspection"?

No. "testing" is a blanket word for the actions required to understand the issue (including Hydrajaws testing if necessary). The actual method of "testing" deployed will be recorded in the Defective Anchor Log Sheet. It is expected that only suitably accredited installers will undertake this testing and they will have the necessary skills to carry out the appropriate "tests"

Item E

The CSCC seeks to encourage the use of an online list of all bolts placed under the BCA scheme giving the Unique Anchor Code (indicating cave, pitch and anchor), the last test/inspection date and the current status of the anchor (OK, Removed, Reported etc.). See <http://csc.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=equipment:start> for an example. NB the topos are optional extras.

This would allow the sport caver to check for known problems **before** going underground.

The caves and pitches with BCA anchors can be seen, including those placed since publication of the latest rigging guide.

The state of the inspection scheme is visible to all.

5. Will the E&T Committee support an online list?

No. The E&T Committee have agreed a "universal" online list is not necessary. The current method of documenting anchors is well proven and has been in place and working

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successfully since 1992. This does not preclude a Regional Council from publishing their anchors online if they should so wish.

Item F

The IPTD gives a detailed description of what records are to be kept. However there is no mention of an audit process to check that those records are being kept accurately or even kept.

The Acting E&T Chairman said that the audit trail for installed anchors is available to anyone upon request to the appropriate Regional Council [BCA Minutes 20/6/09, App. 2]. However this doesn't amount to an audit process.

6. What is the audit process?
7. Can the audit process be added to the IPTD?

The E&T Committee have agreed to update section 9.5 of the IPTD to reflect the audit process.

Item G

It is imperative that the records held by the Regional Co-ordinator are not lost. There is no requirement in the IPTD to lodge a copy of the documents with a second party to act as a backup should a disaster befall the originals.

8. Can a requirement for a backup copy be added to the IPTD?

Yes. The responsibility for back up of anchor records lies with the Regional Caving Council. Section 9 of the IPDT will be updated accordingly.

Item H

IPTD 10.1 says that the trainee "must be competent in SRT and rigging techniques". Many Mendip pitches are only ladder pitches and there is no requirement for SRT.

We have keen volunteers who can rig a ladder climb competently and safely but have no desire to do SRT.

9. Can the wording be changed to "Cavers wishing to be considered for training must be competent in the relevant type of rigging technique for the pitch and be approved in writing by the Regional Council"?

The E&T Committee spent a lot of time discussing this, however the E&T Committee are not prepared to change the existing wording because:

- There are existing SRT routes in the CSCC area that need to be inspected and maintained by a competent and accredited installer.
- The E&T Committee do not accept that installing anchors for ladder and lifeline safely requires a lower skill level.
- Lack of local SRT skills should not be a reason to downgrade the standard of the IPTD, especially when SRT training for potential installers is available free of charge from BCA.
- The E&T Committee believe that potential installers should be brought up to the required skill level rather than creating a special category of installer for only ladder and lifeline.