

## 498.

# Ropes courses inspections

Many IBs undertake inspections of ropes courses and other equipment offering similar, ‘adventure style’ activities. Some of these device types are registered with ADIPS and others operate under other schemes e.g. the European Ropes Course Association (ERCA).

Earlier this year BSI published an update to BS 15567. The new version of the standard is BS EN 15567-1:2015+A1:2020 Sports and recreational facilities – Ropes courses – Part 1: Construction and safety requirements. The amendment contains one change only; that is to section 7.1.2 Inaugural Inspection. A comparison between the superseded (2015) and new (2020) clause 7.1.2 is below:

2020 version	2015 version
<p>Before the site is inaugurated, it shall be ensured that the site is in compliance with EN 15567-1. The following shall be carried out and documented by an inspection body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) visual inspection;</li> <li>b) functional test (see 3.38) carried out at height by an inspector;</li> <li>c) verification that the course has been constructed in accordance with the design drawings (e.g. guy angles);</li> <li>d) checking that design calculation and/or tree assessment exist;</li> <li>e) check the current arboreal assessment to ensure that all trees used as a support system have been judged safe to use.</li> </ul> <p>It is recommended that that the inspection is carried out by a type A inspection body according to EN ISO/IEC 17020:2012, 4.1</p>	<p>Before the site is inaugurated, it is recommended that a type A inspection body (see 3.43) according to EN ISO/IEC 17020:2012, 4.1 certify that the site is in compliance with EN 15567-1. The following shall be carried out by an inspection body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) visual inspection;</li> <li>b) functional test (see 3.42) carried out at height by an inspector;</li> <li>c) verification that the course has been constructed in accordance with the design drawings (e.g. guy angles);</li> <li>d) checking that design calculation and/or tree strength assessment exist;</li> <li>e) check the current arboreal assessment to ensure that all trees used as a support system have been judged safe to use.</li> </ul>

In the 2015 version there were two errors with the references – there was no clause 3.43 and point [b) function test (see 3.42)] should have referred to clause 3.38.

Standards are written with specific verbal forms. These are:

“shall” indicates a requirement;

“should” indicates a recommendation;

“may” indicates a permission;

“can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

### **Analysis of the amended 7.1.2 clause**

The first sentence of the clause uses “shall.” This indicates a requirement of the standard. This, on the face of it, is a simple instruction; before the site is inaugurated some activity is required to confirm the site complies with EN 15567-1. However, there is no guidance on through whom, where, when or how this could be achieved. It is open to interpretation.

The concept of an inaugural inspection in 15567 does not align with the established methodology for an ADIPS Pre-Use Inspection (PUI). This is no criticism of the standard; it should only highlight that the approach of an ADIPS PUI on a ropes course may differ from the inaugural inspection requirements in clause 7.1.2.

Ropes courses in the UK must conform to the EU General Product Safety Directive and therefore the UK General Product Safety Regulations 2005. To do so there is an expectation that it will comply with a relevant national standard which for this type of equipment is BS EN 15567. Whilst not mandatory, the products should also be CE marked to show they comply with The General Product Safety Regulations 2005.