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Innovative Leisure steps in to assist climbing centres after product recall

Hydraulic auto-belay system is a tried and tested alternative to Redpoint clutch descender

Climbing wall specialist Innovative Leisure has come to the assistance of numerous climbing centres, local authorities and other operators of climbing walls following the “stop use” notice issued by the manufacturer MSA Redpoint on their clutch auto-belay descender.

US company MSA North America issued a stop use notice for all such descenders on October 14, 2009, with a subsequent stop use notice update on November 3, 2009, regardless of the date the unit was manufactured or last factory serviced. This course of action followed two incidents involving the failure of two separate Redpoint descender auto-belays, a controlled descent device designed specifically for the challenge course (ropes courses), climbing wall and climbing gym industry. The two incidents involved climbers experiencing rapid rates of descent resulting in injuries.

Following a thorough investigation, MSA is planning to discontinue the Redpoint descender and in doing so stated in a further stop use notice update of December 4, 2009, that it will be “effectively exiting the recreational market for climbing wall auto-belay systems.”

These recent incidents, the stop notice and MSA’s subsequent decision to discontinue the product involved has inevitably created problems for many operators, with those affected now searching for an alternative, replacement system. As a result, Innovative Leisure has been inundated with inquiries and requests for assistance and, with many years’ of experience in both operating and supplying hydraulic auto-belay systems to customers throughout the UK and Europe, backed by US based manufacturer Spectrum Sports International, is offering a proven alternative to the Redpoint descender.

“This situation has obviously caused serious problems for operators of climbing walls, climbing centres and other venues,” commented Innovative Leisure Managing Director Phil Pickersgill. “In the UK, the Health and Safety Executive has also issued a prohibition notice in addition to the manufacturer’s stop use notice so operators are now looking for an alternative system to enable them to keep operating. In many cases the operator does not have staff suitably qualified to use manual belays and so their operation has effectively ground to a halt. Auto-belays are essential for many operators offering an introduction to climbing and for events such as kids’ parties where staff costs, and ratios to guests, have to be commercially viable.”

And he continued: “The auto-belays we use on our climbing walls and towers, our modular climbing panels, the Coconut Tree Climb and our High Ropes courses are manufactured by the innovator and original manufacturer of the air/oil hydraulic dual redundant belay system in the US, Spectrum Sports International, who have over 12 years of development and improvement behind them. They can be used indoors or outdoors and can be installed on almost any existing climbing wall or climbing structure in conjunction with the Auto-Belay Davits. They are extremely safe, limit the possibility for human error and are very quick and easy to set up, operate and maintain, so are a viable and proven alternative for operators previously using the Redpoint descenders. And just to stop some of the confusion about



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which auto-belays can and can't be used, operators already using our systems can continue to do so as normal."

Additionally, Innovative Leisure offers full service and spare parts support while independent safety inspection provides peace of mind for operators. Full details can be obtained directly from Innovative Leisure on +44(0)116 288 7263 or at www.innovativeleisure.co.uk

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Source: INPA / AM Leisure Consultancy / Innovative Leisure

Released: 12th January 2010

Editors notes: INPA magazine is the only UK magazine dedicated to the leisure, play and attractions industry. With a circulation of just under 6000 this quarterly magazine is sent to indoor play centres, Local Authorities, scout association camp sites, bouncy castle hire companies, farm attractions and any person involved in play.

Regular contributors are TIPE (The Inflatable Play Enterprise), Mike Boyle (Indoor Play News), PPA (Play Providers Association), NFAN (National Farm Attractions Network), RPII (Register of Play Inspectors International), IPMA (Inflatable Play Manufacturers Association) and AIMODS (Association of Inflatable Manufacturers, Operators, Designers and Suppliers).