



TSG SRT Ropes Policy

Phil Wolstenholme, Tackle Officer, 3rd June 2016

A. Responsibilities of Members

1. Storage and Maintenance of Rope

- a) Ropes must be kept in a locked tackle store. This must NOT contain any solvents, paints, oils (even in sealed containers) or anything else that may be considered to have a detrimental effect upon ropes.
- b) Ropes must be stored away from direct sunlight and/or heat and must not be left in contact with metals that may corrode (rust weakens ropes).
- c) Ropes may be stored either loosely hanked or chained, but not in circular coils, as this twists the rope.
- d) Ropes that are drying after use may be left in the garage, but as this is less secure, if dry ropes are seen hanging on racks, it would be helpful if members can bring them into the changing area, and leave them outside the Tackle Store if the Tackle Officer (or a pass-code holder) is not present.

2. Keeping Records of the Ropes' History of Use

It is the responsibility of each member borrowing ropes to fill in the relevant details on the recording system at the time of *removal* from the Tackle Store, not on return (see section 6).

3. Use of Ropes by Members and Non-Members

Note - club ropes are intended to be used by club members. Non-TSG members should only use the ropes if they are accompanied by a TSG member, and are also a member of another caving group with suitable third party liability insurance, or are individuals who have their own personal third party liability insurance. Ropes must not be booked out by non-TSG individuals without the express consent of the Tackle Officer or a TSG pass-code holder.

In exceptional circumstances, visiting groups may be lent tackle provided that they are competent and have suitable third party liability insurance. They must also accept that they shall pay fair recompense for any damage caused. The issuing TSG member shall take responsibility for checking the tackle before and after use.

- a) Tackle store access should be controlled by the Tackle Officer, via a pass-code for the key safe. Only Full members are allowed access to the Tackle Store, and will be expected to be experienced and responsible cavers, and trustworthy. Members should apply to the Tackle Officer for the code, which will be changed at intervals with a new code sent out to those holding it. The door must always be locked after use, and the key-safe code reset randomly.
- b) Ropes may only be issued by the Tackle Officer or a pass-code holder if they feel that the request comes from a member with sufficient competence and experience to use and maintain the rope safely.
- c) Ropes should preferably be pre-wetted before use (if possible) to avoid rope-burn by descenders, and to improve the smoothness of descents. If dry ropes are used, descents should be made carefully and ideally with a steel braking karabiner. Stopper knots should ALWAYS be placed at each end of the rope.
- d) Ropes must be washed and then inspected after each trip by pulling them through the rope washer at least 2 times, reversing the ends for each pass.
- e) **Ropes found to be damaged must be quarantined by removing from the drying area/tackle store, clearly identifying them as 'not to be used', storing in a safe place (such as the Technical Tackle cupboards), and the matter reported to the Tackle Officer immediately, giving precise details of the incident.**

Note - Members will not be penalised for reporting damaged ropes. Remember, the lives of others depend upon our honesty. Not reporting damage is extremely irresponsible.

4. Use of Tackle Bags

- a) Ropes must be transported at all times in a serviceable tackle bag.
- b) When taking ropes from the store, it is the responsibility of the members concerned to pack the rope loosely into a serviceable tackle bag and inspect its condition as they do so.
- c) It is the member's responsibility to report damaged tackle bags to the Tackle Master.
- d) Club tackle bags may only be used for transportation of ropes, slings and connectors (karabiners and/or Maillons). Sharp objects must never be carried in tackle bags.

B. Responsibilities of the Tackle Officer.

5. New Ropes

- a) Purchase high-quality Type-A semi-static rope (minimum diameter 9mm) as required.
- b) Preparation of new ropes: before first use, ropes must be immersed in a bath of water overnight, and then dragged through the rope washer and slowly dried. This process effectively shrinks the rope and binds the sheath on to the core, thus preventing it slipping down when first used, and it also removes the spooling lubricant applied by the manufacturer.
- c) Tagging new ropes: new ropes must be labelled with a waterproof pen at both ends with:
 - (i) 'TSG' identifier and tag of yellow tape.
 - (ii) Length (in metres) less 5% (safety margin to allow for further shrinkage).
 - (iii) Year purchased.

The tagging then needs protecting with a transparent heat shrink sleeve.
- d) Cutting new ropes - avoid cutting new ropes into short lengths to begin with (they will be cut down as they get older as a result of damage / the need for short lengths).

6. Keeping Records of the Ropes' History of Use

- a) An annual Master Record for each rope purchased after May 2016 must be kept. This record must include:
 - (i) date of purchase.
 - (ii) length.
 - (iv) number of trips used.

It is the responsibility of the Tackle Officer to keep this record up to date from the tackle store records (see below). An Excel spreadsheet has a list of all ropes currently in use, and would also be the preferred primary option for the Master record, with paper copies being printed annually for the Library record if required.

- b) Tackle Store records - it is the responsibility of the Tackle Officer to provide a recording system for each rope taken from the tackle store. It is the responsibility of the borrower to complete the record at the time the rope is taken. The printed record should include:
 - (i) Borrower's name.
 - (ii) Ropes taken.
 - (iii) Date rope taken and returned.

- (iv) Location of use.
- (v) Number on trip

It is the Tackle Officer's responsibility to monitor this system, transfer relevant records to the Master Record on the spreadsheet/Library copy on a quarterly basis, and make a report on rope condition and usage to the AGM.

- c) Damaged rope - recommendations to the Tackle Officer.
 - (i) Ropes with physical damage must be cut and resealed at the point of the damage and retagged with the original date identification and the new lengths.
 - (ii) Ropes with chemical damage by e.g. battery acid/alkali/fuel should be decommissioned (see 8 below).
 - (iii) Ropes which have suffered severe falls should be decommissioned (see 8 below). (Static ropes should never be shock loaded).

7. Rope Testing

Ropes should be inspected at least twice a year for sheath damage (burns, frays, cuts etc.) and significant bends or twists in the rope that might indicate core damage. Whilst age could be a determining factor in inspection intervals, frequency of usage is a far more important criterion.

8. Decommissioning

Ropes to be decommissioned must be assumed to be unsafe for SRT, and have all identification marks removed and be taken from the tackle store. This rope must either be destroyed or put to digging use only, but careful consideration should be given to the condition of the rope before implementation in any load-bearing situation for obvious safety reasons.

9. Use of Tackle Bags

- a) The Tackle Officer must ensure that the tackle bags available in the tackle store are serviceable. In the event of damage, the Tackle Officer must arrange for the bags to be repaired or replaced.
- b) The Tackle Officer must inform members at the AGM of the state of the tackle bags and must request funds to purchase new ones when appropriate.