



Statement by the International Adventure Park Association (IAPA e.V.)

on the report broadcast by EenVandaag on 18 September 2017

https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/item/veel-mis-met-veiligheid-klimbossen-1/?npo_cc=126&

Following the report on ropes courses and their risks broadcast by the Dutch television channel EenVandaag on 18 September 2017, we, the International Adventure Park Association (IAPA e.V.), have decided to make a statement.

The IAPA represents the international interests of adventure parks and high ropes courses. The IAPA sets standards by developing quality standards based on existing EU standards and directives, and providing adventure parks and high ropes courses with training in their implementation. In doing so, the IAPA ensures that the industry remains stable and develops properly.

It is true that climbing at height (in trees, on poles, or on suspension bridges) entails risks.

It is also true that some of the examples shown in the report do not comply with current EU standards and some of the equipment was not used as intended.

It must be said that the defects shown in the report should have been noticed by qualified and experienced ropes course inspectors.

It would, however, be wrong to conclude that ropes courses are generally unsafe.

The European Ropes Course Standard EN 15567:2008, Part 1 and 2, has been in effect since 2008. This standard establishes safety requirements regarding the design, construction, inspection and maintenance of ropes courses and their elements and defines operation requirements to guarantee a suitable level of safety and maintenance. The revised and amended second version of the ropes course standard EN 15567:2015-08 [1] repeatedly indicates that using a ropes course involves potential risks, that these should be assessed using a risk assessment and must be managed by the operator in such a way so as to reduce them to an acceptable level.

The examples mentioned in the report fall largely under the inspection of ropes courses. The ropes course standard EN 15567:2015-08 [1] identifies three types of inspection:

- the routine visual check (carried out by the facility's staff – every day before the facility is opened)
- the operational inspection (carried out by a specially trained facility employee – every 1-3 months)
- regularly recurring inspection (carried out by an external expert wherever possible – once every calendar year)



Having very well trained staff is an absolute must in the ropes course industry in order to be able to guarantee the highest possible level of safety for guests and employees. Operators and the facility's staff must be trained in the current national and European directives and standards. The risks associated with the ropes course can only be mitigated if the staff is aware of the dangers in the facility and has acquired the necessary skills and abilities during training.

The IAPA is one of the market leaders in providing further training for operators of high ropes courses and adventure parks and their staff. At the locations of the training institutions in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, certified trainers teach in accordance with IAPA standards. The IAPA is supported by top experts and companies who share the IAPA's vision of high-quality services in high ropes courses and adventure parks. Every IAPA training course stands out for being up-to-date and of the highest quality and safety [2].

Thanks to the IAPA's quality seal, a ropes course's membership in the association is clearly indicated to the guest, showing that the ropes course in question prioritises quality, is up-to-date and fulfils the requirements of the ropes course standard.

To dispel any doubts on the subject, using adventure parks, climbing centres and high ropes course is certainly safe if the following prerequisites are met: EU standards are taken as the working basis and are adhered to and implemented by both the constructor and the operator, only equipment that has been tested and developed for the intended purpose is used and the staff is qualified. Moreover, existing quality standards must be implemented to reduce to an acceptable level the residual risk that climbing and moving around in ropes courses at height entails.

In Germany in 2015 more than 10,000 fatal accidents occurred in the leisure sector [3] – however, no known case took place in a ropes course, with approx. 4 million climbing guests in such parks. All operators, constructors and manufacturers known to IAPA do their absolute best to ensure that using a ropes course is as safe as possible. Accidents in the industry are not in the interests of any of these groups of people.

Further information:

We would like to kindly invite everyone who is part of the ropes course sector and interested in the topic of adventure parks and high ropes courses to participate in our annual IAPA International Adventure Park Meeting on 14 and 15 November 2017 in Berlin.

In addition to the IAPM trade fair, visitors can look forward to lectures, workshops, the IAPA Innovation Award vote and presentation, and ample space and time to get to know the manufacturers and key players of the industry. Detailed information on www.iapa.cc



References:

1. DIN Deutsches Institut für Normung e. V. (German Institute for Standardization), editor. Sports and recreational facilities - Ropes courses - Part 1: Construction and safety requirements and Part 2: Operation requirements; German version EN 15567-1:2015 and EN 15567-2:2015. Beuth Verlag GmbH, Berlin; 2015.
2. Brischke J, Heinemann L, Schindelwick S, Edlefsen T, Da Costa-Jütte M. KISS - Keep it simple and safe 2.0 - Das offizielle IAPA Ausbildungshandbuch für Betreuer, Retter, Toprope Belay/ IAPA's official training manual for instructors, rescuers, top rope belayers. 2017.
3. H. Hinnenkamp, M. Lück, S. Brenscheidt. Unfallstatistik 2015 [Internet]. Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin (BAuA); 2017 [cited 2017 Sep 20]. Available from: <https://www.baua.de/DE/Angebote/Publikationen/Fakten/Unfallstatistik-2015.html>

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