

Equipment records

2000

Issue

Recent research, revealed at the BMC Technical Committee Conference supports the view that ropes last MUCH longer than some manufacturers would have you believe. In particular, the idea of a 2 or 3 year shelf life is now seen as nonsense. To achieve complete failure (i.e. for the rope to break) it has to either

- a. run over a sharp edge and cut; or
- b. be corroded by acid; or
- c. be repeatedly dropped under extreme weight-drop conditions on the same section of rope. Even in research situations the rope never fails on the first drop — there is always severe and obvious damage to the outer sheath and the oldest rope tested was, we believe, 23 years old.

Outcome

In keeping with the BMC Ropes pamphlet, ropes should be discarded when they become unmanageable, particularly during belaying or abseiling, or damaged. Common sense suggests that if the outer sheath is severely and obviously damaged the rope should be discarded or downgraded.

What implications does this have on logging the use of ropes (and also slings, harnesses etc.)? Evidence suggests that there are far greater safety benefits to be gained from logging when a rope has been inspected than there are from merely logging when it is used. Providers may wish to abandon this unnecessary procedure if it exists only for safety reasons.