

Info Log - September 2014.

Cow's Tail and Quick Draw failures

The issue.

Over the years there have been accidents and incidents when using cow's tails and quick draws.

Some recent ones that the AALS is aware of include some previously reported - (see Infolog entries Zip Wire Accident and Attachment to Zip Wire Failed under 2011). In addition there are two more situations to be aware of that have resulted in accidents:

1. Look **closely** at the photograph below. The configuration on the right has a rubber 'retainer' which prevents the rope from moving around but is not intended to be part of the structural 'chain'. In the configuration on the left however the rubber retainer is **part of the chain** and it is this that, not surprisingly, failed when loaded. Easy to miss isn't it?!



2. A very similar re-configuration can happen with some climbing slings and quick draws with the same catastrophic result.

See the dramatic video link below.

<http://www.ukclimbing.com/news/item.php?id=68201!>

You can see in the photo on the right that the sling is not clipped to the karabiner, it is just held by the elastic band. This is **INCORRECT**.
(Courtesy of UK Climbing)

The message is the same for slings, quick-draws and cows' tails: don't use rubber retainers on (open) slings or quick draws.



'Open' quick draw
(Interestingly with a rubber retainer)



'Fully sewn' quick draw

Something similar can happen with cows' tails. However, rubber retainers on cow's tails can hold the karabiner in place and so serve a useful function. Simply not using them can produce further new problems.

Learning points.

There are several ways of preventing accidental unclipping allowing the configuration to 'invert' (as in the video clips):

- Ensure the loop is small enough to make the accidental unclipping impossible.

- Use a captive eye karabiner.



Captive eye karabiner

- Use a Barrel Knot or similar.
- Don't use rubber retainers and find other solutions to the problems this raises.