

Use of sub-contracted providers whilst overseas

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Issue

The use of subcontracted providers whilst overseas.

Background

The vast majority of UK providers who work overseas have good safety management standards and guidance. However, it seems that some overseas activity providers who may be subcontracted by UK providers do not necessarily follow the same high standards of safety.

Outcome

UK providers operating overseas have a duty to their participants to check on the safety management systems of any sub contracted 'in country' provider of activities of any sort. This can be difficult to ensure. If it is possible to make a reconnaissance visit, then someone with expertise should see an activity in operation, assess the risks of the activity, the techniques used and the competence of their staff, establish their incident and emergency planning arrangements and the financial protection and liability insurance. This will go a long way to gaining confidence in their standards. This particularly came to light during an investigation into a zip wire fatality overseas where all the above took place, but because of the use of a snap link karabiner attachment to the harness rather than a screw gate or auto locking one, the participant became detached and fell to their death.

Potential clients would do well to check if the company they plan to book with is compliant with the new British Standard BS 8848: The Specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the UK.