

Fitting lamp brackets to helmets for caving

March 2009

Issue

Adventure Activity providers who offer caving have been having a problem buying replacement helmets with brackets attached to enable them to fix caving lamps.

Background

There is no specific standard for caving helmets. Over the years cavers have used site helmets, mining helmets and climbing helmets. These all have their own standards appropriate to what the demands are on each type. Over recent years cavers have used climbing helmets to CE and UIAA standards. Generally speaking manufacturers do not fit caving lamp brackets to their helmets and in some cases, if they do, it will invalidate the CE/UIAA certificate for mountaineering use.

Adventure Activities Licence holders are concerned about invalidating this CE/UIAA certificate whether fitted by a supplier or buying the brackets (which are available) and fitting them themselves.

The majority of caving with novice groups is at British Caving Association Local Cave and Mine Leader Assessment Level 1 venues, i.e. without pitches or significant drops and low risk of rock fall. In these cases wearing a helmet is primarily to protect against bumps in the dark and in low passages and to give somewhere to fix a light so that both hands can be kept free.

Suggested actions

A climbing helmet when used for caving needs to be fit for this use rather than for mountaineering and in most cases this means that it will need to have a lamp bracket attached to allow hands-free caving. Common sense suggests that if a lamp bracket is fixed to a suitable helmet carefully and appropriately, i.e. in the correct position with suitable holes using suitable rivets or nuts and bolts, this will have only marginal effect on its strength. Some manufacturers offer this bracket fitting service, e.g. Caving Supplies in Buxton (see their website) or a trained person could also fit them. The usual equipment checks on the helmets should be undertaken, and logged, including paying attention to the area around the bracket to pick up any cracking or other visual problems.