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Subject: Rappel Equipment and Procedural Change
Area of Concern: Rappel Operations
Distribution: Rappel Bases

Discussion: This Safety Alert has been generated due to recent rappel events.

Required Action: All rappel bases shall immediately discontinue the practice of opening the Maillon Rapide tri-link on the HR-2 rappel harness for any purpose other than (1) changing a defective Forgecraft or Bourdon snap hook or (2) replacing the rubber O-ring/Kong Clip that secures the right soft loop to the right corner of the tri-link.

When it becomes necessary to change a snap hook or O-ring/Kong Clip, the work shall be performed by a qualified rappel spotter. After replacing the defective part, the locking nut on the tri-link shall be tightened with a wrench until it is not possible to unscrew the locking nut by hand (using fingers only, no wrench).

After the locking nut is tightened, a contrasting color of fingernail polish shall be used to apply a longitudinal witness mark on the uppermost facet of the locking nut extending ½ inch onto the tri-link (red line on tri-link in Figure 1). The witness mark will permit a rappeller or rappel spotter to confirm through visual inspection that the locking nut is secure and has not rotated since it was tightened.

In addition, discontinue immediately the practice of using Kong Clips to keep the rappel locking snap hook eye located at the apex of the Maillon Rapide tri-link (this order applies to both Forgecraft and Bourdon snap hooks). The only approved accessory for positioning the snap hook at the tri-link apex shall be a 1 1/16” diameter rubber O-ring.

To install an apex O-ring, slip the O-ring over the tip of the snap hook (Figure 2), and slide the O-ring down the snap hook (Figure 3) and over the eye until the O-ring contacts the tri-link (Figures 4,5). Any qualified rappeller can replace a snap hook O-ring as long as they do not open the tri-link during the process.

Section 3.2 of the Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide will be revised to reflect the changes described in this safety alert; hard copies of the IHRG will need to be updated by each owner of this guide. http://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/rappel/index.htm
If you have questions or concerns about this Safety Alert, please call Tim Lynch at 406-329-3958 or send an email to tlynch@fs.fed.us.

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