

Date: 4/15/2003

Re: **SAFETY ALERT – USE OF UNAPPROVED TREE CLIMBING EQUIPMENT**

(Reference: OSHA adopted ANSI Z133.1-2000 section 8.7.6 standard)

Two national forests in Region 6 were cited last year by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for having in possession climbing equipment which does not meet current safety standards. Specifically, non-locking rope snaps (also referred to as “snap catch”, “snap link” or “snap hook”) used on a lanyard were identified as not meeting the OSHA adopted ANSI Z133 standard. The current standard for any use of rope snaps in a life support application states that they “*shall be the self-closing, locking type with a minimum tensile strength of 5,000 pounds*”.

The issue of locking rope snaps was first addressed in a May 2, 1995 letter from the (Region 6) Regional Office, to the Portland office of OSHA. The concern at the time was the documented difficulty in opening some manufacturers locking snaps. We proposed using existing equipment until such time as the problem with locking snaps was corrected, and thereafter requiring the use of them as equipment was replaced.

Within the next 3 years, the problem had been corrected, whereupon in 1998 we began communicating the need, during our annual National tree climbing training workshops, to meet the standard and replace existing non-locking rope snaps with the locking type. The current National Tree Climbing Policy, and National Tree Climbing field Guide are currently in the process of revision to reflect this.

Therefore, in order to mitigate the current citation, and ensure additional citations are not issued, as of this date, **do not use non-locking rope snaps while tree climbing, for any life support application.** Self-closing, locking rope snaps are available individually, or as part of a lanyard system, from several suppliers. You can access the web sites of several suppliers by selecting “Resources” in the National Tree climbing web site, at the following web address: www.fs.fed.us/treeclimbing.

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