

PETZL STATEMENT ON A SPECIAL USE OF THE PETZL SHUNT

In the light of incidents and accidents, indicative tests have been conducted, including – but not limited to – a workshop in March 2011 with rope-access experts present. The findings of these indicative tests demonstrate that releasing a towing cord while towing a Petzl Shunt as a back-up device is not consistently effective.

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Context:

Since 1999 Petzl has provided specific information regarding the special use of the Petzl SHUNT as a back-up device for industrial rope access. Petzl required that users must have received and mastered IRATA (Industrial Rope Access Trade Association) training or similar and must also use the Petzl SHUNT within the current "IRATA method".

Extract from the June 2009 statement:

"Professional operatives who choose to use the Petzl Shunt as a rope-access and work-positioning back-up device must have received and mastered IRATA training or similar, and must use the Petzl Shunt with IRATA method. Responsibility for this remains with the employer and the user."

Analysis:

In the light of incidents and accidents, indicative tests have been conducted, including – but not limited to – a workshop in March 2011 with rope-access experts present. The findings of these indicative tests demonstrate that releasing a towing cord while towing a Petzl Shunt as a back-up device is not consistently effective:

- In an emergency situation, the natural human reflex is to increase the grip on the cord, therefore reducing the likelihood that the cord will be pulled from the hand.
- Additionally, this natural reflex may override any conscious action to open the hand and release the cord.
- Consequently, either of these hazards could result in overriding the braking function of the Petzl Shunt.

Following these tests, working sessions with IRATA alerted Petzl to the fact that there has not been special training sufficient to minimize this potential risk. Testing and experience demonstrates that human response to emergency situations, even among expert users and highly trained professionals, is not completely predictable.

Previous Petzl statements required special training for this specific use of the Petzl Shunt. The lack of any described methods or special training therefore makes these previous Petzl statements obsolete.

As a measure of precaution, Petzl recommends to NOT use the Petzl Shunt, while towed by a cord, as a back-up device in rope access.

This statement supersedes all previous statements and communications relating to this particular use of the Petzl Shunt.



Frequently asked questions.

Referring to the Petzl January 2012 Statement regarding the use of the Petzl Shunt as an industrial rope-access back-up device while towed by a cord.

1. Does this statement apply to sport use?

No. This content only applies to the use of the Petzl Shunt in industrial rope-access situations. This content does not apply to sport uses as described in the Technical Notice.

2. Does this new Petzl information affect me?

If you or your company uses Petzl Shunts as part of an industrial rope-access back-up system, then you are affected by this information.

3. Why has Petzl changed their point of view regarding their previous statements?

Previous Petzl statements required special training for this specific use of the Petzl Shunt. In 2011, Petzl discovered three important points through tests and also during working sessions with IRATA:

In an emergency situation, the natural human reflex is to increase the grip on the cord, reducing the likelihood that the cord will be pulled from the hand. Additionally this natural reflex may override any conscious action to open the hand and release the cord. Consequently, either of these hazards could result in overriding the braking function of the Petzl Shunt.

There is a lack of any described methods or special training for this specific back-up technique.

Further, it was agreed that any training to overcome this natural reflex is not currently possible or justifiable.

In light of these three points, as a measure of precaution, Petzl's duty was to alert and inform the community of these hazards.

4. 5. and 6. The company I work for issues its workers with Petzl Shunts and towing cords. What should I do? Do I need to stop work? How much time do I have if I need to change my system of work?

Contact the person responsible for rope access in your company and check that they

have seen and understand the requirements of the Petzl January 2012 statement. Ask if they have an existing risk analysis document covering the points raised, and if there are any special measures which need to be taken.

Users may wish to implement a transition period towards improving their back-up system. It is expected that the employers will:

- Inform all users of this information.
- Perform a detailed risk analysis while taking account of available information concerning this method of use, including Technical Instructions.
- Create and communicate to their employees an action plan for any required changes in accordance with the hazards identified by the risk analysis and any identified control measures.

This action plan will specifically detail any timeline.

Throughout this timeline, the responsibility for the selection and training for use of the back-up system continues to lie with the employer, as noted in the previous Petzl documents.

7. What can I do if I need to change my current back-up system?

As a reminder, back-up systems will always have compromises. It is possible to reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring, but it cannot be entirely excluded. Alternative solutions may include the following:

Use a different back-up system:

- Rope-adjustment device to EN12841 A or fall-arrest device to EN353-2, as applicable for the rope-access task. For example, the Petzl ASAP – including, if required or for rescue, an appropriate lanyard.
- An independently anchored EN360 automatic device.
- Use of an independent system adapted to the situation. For example, consider airbags for low-clearance working, nets or a secondary vertical fall-arrest system.

Change the technique: For example, independent movement of the Petzl Shunt and the descending device. Warning: this method does not eliminate all potential risks – it can reduce likelihood, but requires vigilance, supervision and training. It does not exclude the issue of releasing the cord while manipulating the Petzl Shunt. If the Petzl Shunt is used with a lanyard, then this use falls outside the manufacturer's instructions. Consider carefully the realistic use of this method during long descents or with loads over 100kg.

Reminder: The employers and users take the final responsibility to fully analyze the associated risks and to train in all aspects of use of these possible solutions.

8. Do I need to re-think my rescue plans?

You must verify that your rescue plans provide an effective back-up system for a two-person load, if this is an anticipated method of rescue, and that all equipment is adapted for this use. First, consider other methods of rescue which remove or minimize the need for two-person loads.

9. What about the use of a Petzl Shunt as a back-up device for two-person use or for those technicians over 100kgs?

In the June 2009 Petzl statement regarding the use of the Petzl Shunt as a rope-access back-up device, the following information was given, which remains relevant: "Use of the Petzl Shunt as a back-up device for loads greater than one person has not been tested by Petzl, and requires careful consideration by the operator: analysis of rope type and condition, compatibility of the rope with the Petzl Shunt in this situation of extra loading, etc. In this specific situation, it remains the

user's responsibility to check rope/Petzl Shunt performance. Other devices are currently available which are more suited to this task.

In 2005 Petzl introduced the Petzl ASAP mobile fall arrest device for use with a single EN1891 low-stretch rope. The Petzl ASAP is appropriate in many rope-access situations, including two-person rescues, and is approved to EN353-2 and EN12841 type A."

10. How long is this new statement valid?

It is valid until further notice.

11. and 12. Are the original Petzl documents still valid? Are the original Petzl documents valid during any transition period?

The previous documents from Petzl relating to this topic explain the need for specific training. The Petzl SHUNT was specified and used as a rope-access back-up device solely according to the training made available by the employer and the employer's risk analysis, because such use is not included in the Petzl Shunt instructions for use. The previous statements from Petzl have not taken the place of the instructions for use. They give more information for the user, explaining the potential risks associated with this particular use. The Petzl January 2012 statement supersedes all previous documents concerning this topic, from its date of publication.

The employers and users, however, must take the final responsibility for the selection and use of all work equipment.

The Petzl January 2012 statement comes as a result of product and user experience, which is evolving continuously. In addition, please read question 6, above.

13. Has IRATA published any information relating to this important topic?

IRATA is currently creating guidance information specifically for their members, which will be presented on their website and relates to the use of the Petzl SHUNT as a rope-access back-up device when towed by a cord.

14. Was IRATA consulted during the production of this January 2012 Petzl statement?

Yes, Petzl was invited to meet with members of the IRATA Executive Committee and their Technical Coordinator on a number of occasions since September 2011, in order to discuss the subject and identify any issues that may prevent a technician from working during any period. Communications have been regular between IRATA and Petzl with regard to technical questions and information, and this communication continues.

15. Why did Petzl release this new statement nine months after the indicative tests?

In September 2011, Petzl sent an official letter to IRATA, requesting a response and action after having learned about these indicative tests. IRATA then invited Petzl to be involved in working sessions, in order to achieve a joint communication to alert users of the hazards surrounding this specific use of the Petzl SHUNT as a back-up device in rope access. This process ended in mid December 2011.

16. I have just bought Petzl Shunts based on the June 2009 Petzl statement. Can I return them?

If the Petzl Shunts are unused, YES ! Please contact your local Petzl distributor for further information.

If the Petzl Shunts are already in service, NO! The employers and users take the final responsibility for the selection and use of all work equipment. Until the publication of the January 2012 statement, the Petzl Shunt was used and was specified according to the special training made available by the employer. The Petzl January 2012 statement comes as a result of product and user experience, which is evolving continuously.

17. 18. and 19. Can I continue to use the Petzl SHUNT in rope access? Can I use the Petzl SHUNT outside of the Technical Notice? Can I continue to use the SHUNT in the same technique, just without the towing cord?

The likelihood of not releasing an attached towing cord is covered in the Petzl January 2012 statement, but of course other foreseeable events exist and some are explained in the Petzl SHUNT Technical Notice :

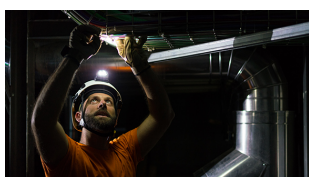
The distinct hazard of grabbing or holding the SHUNT is explained, as it results in overriding the braking function of the SHUNT.

Towing the SHUNT without a cord increases the likelihood of grabbing the device.

This possibility is greatly increased with the use of a lanyard connection between harness and SHUNT because this moves the SHUNT into a position more likely to be reflex grabbed by a user. In addition it can increase the height of the fall and the possibility of grabbing the rope just above the SHUNT. It is for these exact reasons that the use of the SHUNT with a lanyard is crossed out in the Technical Notice.

Using the Petzl SHUNT outside the recommendations of the January 2012 Petzl Statement or outside the Petzl Technical Notice requires a thorough risk analysis of the specific use, must consider all available information (including the Technical Notice) and is under the full responsibility of the user. As in all cases, the user accepts full responsibility for any use which is not included in a manufacturer's Technical Notice.

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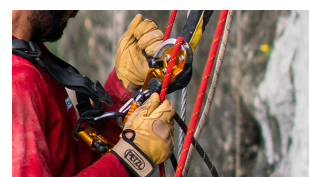
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The activities depicted are inherently dangerous. All users must be trained and competent in the use of the equipment for these activities.

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