



RISK MANAGEMENT *BULLETIN*

The Arizona Municipal Risk Retention Pool

No. 78

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STOP USE NOTICE ISSUED ON MSA DESCENDERS

MSA, a Pittsburgh-based manufacturer of safety equipment, has issued a Stop Use Notice relating to its Redpoint and Auto-Belay Descenders. In addition to use by private recreational companies that may use these products in gyms and/or, climbing or climbing wall environments, they are also used by some law enforcement agencies, fire departments and municipal public works or maintenance departments.

The original Stop Use Notice was issued in on October 14, 2009 after MSA became aware of two incidents in which climbers using Redpoint Descenders experienced rapid rates of descent resulting in injuries. MSA reported that its initial investigation of the units involved indicated that an issue with the devices' one-way ball bearings may have prevented the products' brakes from engaging during descent. According to MSA, users were unable to detect the problem before the rapid descents occurred.

The Stop Use Notice applied to Redpoint Descenders with part numbers 10024873, 10027646 and 10027798 regardless of the date the units were manufactured or last serviced. The Stop Use Notice also applied to Auto-Belay Descenders with part number 10021806 manufactured or last serviced on or after June 30, 2000. Product part numbers, manufacture dates and dates of last factory service are located on each unit on the white "date of manufacture" label affixed to the back of the housing.

MSA also reported that while its investigation into the two reported incidents of rapid descent was being conducted, the company would not be shipping any Redpoint Descenders that were currently on order, nor would they be shipping out any Redpoint Descenders that had been sent to them for service. No new orders for Redpoint Descenders were being accepted.

On November 3, 2009, MSA issued a Stop-Use Update on the aforementioned products. MSA reported that its review and testing of the two individual descender units involved in the two rapid-descent incidents indicated no evidence of any physical damage that would have affected the rate of descent. MSA reported that it had dimensionally checked the products' brakes and one-way bearings in several ways and that it had conducted a dimensional and chemical analysis of the bearings. As of the November 3rd update, MSA's testing protocols had not replicated the accelerated descent that was reported in the injury incidents involving the two units. MSA reported that the units' bearings had been sent to the bearing manufacturer for additional, independent analysis and that they were awaiting the results thereof. MSA was also conducting additional tests to determine the effect of vibration on the performance of the bearings and that results were expected within one week. At this time, the MSA website does not include any more recent test result updates.

MSA emphasized in its November 3rd update that the previously issued Stop Use Notice remained in effect and that further updates would follow once its investigation was completed.

AMRRP Members are urged to pass this information along to their police, fire, public works and maintenance departments for review. Those departments are urged to discontinue use of the aforementioned MSA products until further investigative results are available. For additional information or future updates, visit the MSA website at: www.msanorthamerica.com. Type "Redpoint Descenders" in the search window and click on "MSA Product Safety Notices".

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