

Bungee Running

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Scout
Information
Centre

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Introduction & History

This is the first edition of a supporting factsheet on the activity "Bungee Running". Further editions may be produced in the light of experience with this edition. Production of further editions will be notified in SCOUTING Magazine, Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

Concern has been expressed within the Association as to the safety of this activity. This factsheet has been compiled in an attempt to improve the safety of this event for the Association's Members and makes suggestions based on the successful, injury free running of such events.

Overview

Bungee running involves participants running as far as they can whilst connected to an elastic rope, which is anchored to a fixed point. The normal scenario involves either muddy ground or tarpaulins covered in soapy water to make the progress more difficult. Participants try to place markers at the furthest extension of the bungee rope. Variations involve balloon bursting en route and the wearing of fancy dress. The more obvious hazards include limb and head injuries.

Safety Recommendations

The first precaution is obviously to be mindful of the safety implications of any event, whatever the nature. A lot of fun can be had from bungee running provided some basic guidelines are followed. These are explained below, along with a checklist which needs to be referred to each time the activity is run.

Location

Due to the extension of the bungee rope during this activity, it is necessary to find a large clear area (free of all obstructions, e.g. tree roots, stumps, paths etc.) with suitable anchorage point(s). This area should not be too narrow, as it has been found that participants can run or fall

back in an arc. A minimum safe distance on either side of the run line, of not less than one third the total run length on both sides should be used. The surface should be soft in case a participant falls, and the ideal seems to be flat lawn or wetted muddy ground. This also adds to the enjoyment for participants.

Taking the previous points into account, it is strongly recommended that bungee running should not take place indoors. Many hazards such as cupboards, windows and doors pose an additional risk to the participant.

Anchorage

Less strain will be exerted on the anchorages than present during abseiling, however it is recommended, due to the likelihood for shock loads, that anchors are as secure as those normally required for that sport. A single anchor point should never be used, to avoid injuries resulting from the participant rebounding on to the anchor fixing.

Two trees, well rooted and of at least 200mm (8") diameter should suffice. Under no circumstances should a dead tree be used regardless of its apparent soundness. Anchorage should be as low as possible down on the trunk, no more than 500mm (18") from ground level. Climbing tape loops should be used (1" width is acceptable) with protection to and from the bark of the tree. This will ensure that there is no wear on the anchor loop and no damage to the tree itself. The loops need to be attached to the bungee rope using screw gate karabiners. Separate karabiners for double anchors will prevent total failure in the event that one anchor point fails. Despite the inherent safety in using two anchorage points, anchorage fixings should be adequately padded in case of sideways recoil.

Should a 'run' area be chosen without any natural anchorage points, you may have found the ideal 'run' having no hidden tree stumps etc., the anchorage points then have to be artificially constructed. In this instance and especially if softer ground is being used, these should be of a

pioneering nature, using well driven pickets doubled up in a 3-2-1 system or well buried marquee style metal pegs to ensure the strain placed on the anchorages during operation do not tear it from the ground. These must be padded to ensure no injury by tripping over or falling on the protruding heads.

In almost all cases a length of rope equal to that of the bungee cord should be joined to the cord, thus ensuring that 'at rest' the participants are twice the length of the cord away from the anchorage points.

Frequent inspection of the anchorage is necessary during the operation of the run whatever method is employed.

Attaching the Participant

Attachment of the free end of the rope is most safely achieved using a standard climbing belt. The leg loops normally fitted should be removed as they are designed to assist the climber in remaining in an upright position following a fall. As the loads from bungee running are taken from the rear of the participant no advantage is afforded by their use.

It is recommended that the most comfortable position for the belt to be worn is back to front as the buckle is worn away from the highest point of load on the body. Again, staff attaching the participants must assure themselves that the belt is securely fitted and the rope attached in a proper and untangled manner.

Clothing

This should be appropriate depending on the surface over which the run is taking place. At all times it should cover the knees and elbows. Friction burns and bruises are injuries which the wearing of suitable clothing will reduce in intensity. It is recommended that the participants wear old clothes, (preferably long trousers and sturdy shirts), to protect shoulders, thighs, knees and elbows; further protection to the latter may be considered prudent by using skate board style elbow and knee guards especially when the terrain is harder and more compact. Under certain circumstances the use of light weight helmets should be considered e.g. Cycle Helmets.

Staff

Responsible leaders need to be stationed at the anchor point and at the point at which the participants are attached to the rope. It would

also be desirable to have another 'floating' member of staff acting as a 'catcher'. Basic knowledge of climbing/caving equipment is needed by the persons arranging the anchors and connecting the belt to the free end of the bungee rope. This would entail understanding the need for secure anchorages, the correct use of karabiners and the importance of the fully closing screw gate or catch lock variety.

Bungee Rope

Moving to the rope itself, various suppliers exist for bungee cord or rope (also known as shock cord), mainly in the camping or chandlers trade. If in doubt about your nearest suitable stockist contact the British Elastic Rope Sports Association. The largest and most practical size readily available is 10mm diameter.

The anchored and running end of the bungee rope need to be terminated in a double figure of eight knot, similar to a tie-in knot in climbing. This will provide the two loops necessary for karabiner attachment. It is suggested that both the free and the fixed ends of the rope need the loops to be 'parcelled', in hard wearing material, wrapped around the part of the rope which will have frictional loads from the karabiners. This must be removed periodically to check for signs of wear. The rope should be left in this configuration throughout its life as the knots will become extremely difficult to undo following the first few 'runs'

Participants

For use by the average Venture Scout it is recommended that a double length of 10mm bungee cord be used. The rope used consisting of 20m of 10mm cord, doubled to provide 10m final length. Even the most powerful Venture Scout will only manage to extend the rope up to 18m. This should be taken into account when planning the activity area. Participants of smaller stature will probably not be able to use the run with this configuration of bungee cord.

Whilst it would be practically impossible to formulate a general ruling covering all Association Members it is recommended that even if a single length of bungee cord is used for smaller participants it should not be less than 5m unextended length.

Overriding Controls

When not in use the run must be immobilised and remain under constant adult supervision.

Bungee Running Key Points

- **Location**

Clear area, wide arc, no stumps/roots, flat ground.

- **Staff**

Responsible, aware of duties and this factsheet.
Preferred one with first aid training.

- **Equipment**

Must be appropriate for the location and the individual participant.

- **Attaching Participant**

Climbing belt(s), correct knots, screw gate karabiners.

- **Clothing**

Appropriate to surface and conditions.

- **Anchorage**

Strong and stable, properly made.
Two separate points.

- **Bungee Rope**

Suitably selected and configured.
Check for wear and tear regularly.

Do Not Forget To Have Fun!

Overview Diagram

Bungee rope connected to standard climbing harness belt, via floating belay loop and same karabiner arrangement as anchors.

Twin anchor points.

Anchor as you would for abseiling.

Bungee rope connected to anchors using screw gate karabiner, bungee rope knotted as double figure of 8 with loop. Parcelling needed for long duration activity.

Acknowledgements: Messrs Hodgson, Bayliff & Elliott, of Loddon District, Berkshire. Members of the National Activities Team.

