



SAFETY NOTICE

Issued by Angus Pinkerton - Chairman of the Flying & Safety Committee 29th January 1999

All grades of Tow Instructors and Tow Coaches must READ, DIGEST AND TAKE ACTION on the contents of this Notice and keep it for future reference.

If you hold a copy of the BHPA Technical Manual this notice must be inserted into it and retained until it is withdrawn or superseded on instructions from the Chairman FSC.

TOW LINE END CONNECTORS for tow release systems

The Accident Prevention Panel has received several reports of failures of tow line releases and further tests have been initiated. As a result it is now clear that the size, shape and material of the tow line end link or loop (the connector) is critical to the safe operation of the system. It was possible, by using connectors in common use, to easily cause a system to lock up or jam under both high and low loads; this has emphasised the importance of ensuring that the release unit and its connector are compatible.

Users are reminded that it is rare for tow release unit manufacturers to supply or recommend matching connectors and many in-house methods have been devised. The FSC considers that it is therefore imperative that all those in charge of tow launch operations (all disciplines) institute **immediate and continual checks that:**

1. Where applicable only those connectors which are supplied or recommended by the release unit manufacturer are to be used (except as defined in para 3. below).
2. Where no such information is available the connector must be such that there is ample clearance to allow it to pass freely and easily along the moving or fixed jaws or levers of the release unit. It must not, however, be so large that it might foul on another part of the system, or be restricted by any protective muff.
3. Where the principle behind a release unit is a series of interlinked fabric loops, if the diameter of the connector is too small it can easily 'pinch' the release unit loops. This locks the interlinked loops and prevents them slipping free - under both low and high loading. The diameter of the connector must be greater than 25mm to avoid this critical problem. **Unsupported or unreinforced rope or fabric loops must not be used with the fabric type of release unit.**

NOTE - the evaluation is continuing; when completed a detailed article will be published. **In the meantime FSC advice is to use a rigid circular ring between 25 and 50mm internal diameter, and of more than sufficient strength.**