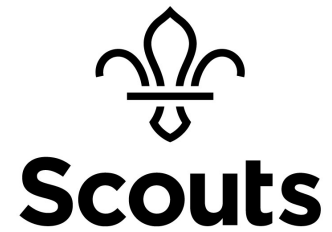


# Learning from Safety Incidents – Abseiling 2



**Item Code:** CS245002 Dec/24

## **Introduction**

This case study aims to support all scout volunteers with anonymised information and key learning points on safety incidents reported to UKHQ. By considering real-life scenarios, volunteers can gain valuable insights into effective strategies for managing similar situations and all scout groups are better prepared for future activities.

## **Case Studie Overview**

At the end of an activity day at a Scout run campsite, the activity leader for the abseiling tower chose to abseil down the tower without proper safety precautions in place. This resulted in them letting go of the abseil rope halfway down and falling 12 feet to the ground.

Immediate first aid was administered, but there was confusion with the 999 operators regarding the exact location of the site, causing a slight delay in the arrival of emergency services.

The injured activity leader sustained multiple injuries, leading to a prolonged period of hospitalisation and recovery.

Limited knowledge of local contacts for escalating the incident meant that key individuals, such as County and District Lead Volunteers, were not informed until several days after the incident. This delay hindered vital local support for the injured activity leader and those who provided first aid.

This was the third such incident at the campsite in a short period, all potentially due to operator error. Local practices had not been formally reviewed or independently checked for a prolonged period of time.

## **Questions to consider**

1. How frequently are the trustee board and leadership team reviewing local incidents and reports to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents in the future?
2. Is there clear signage with multiple references to the postal address, What3Words, and grid references for the site, especially in areas where significant injuries could occur, such as climbing walls and swimming pools?
3. Do your volunteers know how to escalate an incident locally through the lead volunteer line management chain?
4. Is your first aid equipment available and accessible in the event of an accident or emergency?

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5. Do the first aid kits include items for injuries identified in the activity risk assessment?
6. How recently have activity leaders and instructors completed their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to make sure they have the most up-to-date practices, knowledge, and information to deliver safe activities?

## **Key Learning Points**

- Make sure local processes are in place so that activity leaders and instructors understand the required Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and risk assessments for the activity, including any updates, before leading the activity.
- Review the climbing and abseiling setup to make sure that safety equipment, practices, and procedures are in place to keep activity leaders, other volunteers, and young people safe.
- Make sure that activity leaders and instructors are sufficiently trained and have maintained their CPD to demonstrate up-to-date good practice, skills, and knowledge in the activities they deliver.
- Conduct regular, objective reviews of safety incidents and accidents to identify areas for learning and improve local practices and procedures.
- Make sure sufficient, inspected, and in-date Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available for the activities being delivered.