



ACCT Advisory on StrandVises®
June 4, 2007

Recently, a letter written by MacLean Power Systems about the use of the StrandVise® on a challenge course was shared via an email from the Professional Ropes Course Association. The letter stated that StrandVises® were not designed for use on a challenge course, and this use should be discontinued immediately. At ACCT, we are attempting to determine what, or who, provoked the letter and, most importantly, what it means to the industry.

MacLean (and Reliable, it's predecessor) has known since the early 90's at the latest that StrandVises® were in use on challenge courses. In 1993, they were involved in a lawsuit relating to an injury sustained on a challenge course. They along with the challenge course vendor were named as a defendant in the case.

In a letter dated February 3, 1993, MacLean shared tensile testing data that showed that the 5200 series of StrandVises® passed "the criteria we established for qualifying a StrandVise® on a particular cable is it must hold a minimum 90% of the cable's rated breaking strength. The enclosed shows that the 5200, 5201 and 5202 met this criteria on 1/4, 5/16, and 3/8 inch, respectively." A subsequent test report sent on March 3, 1993, states that the 5101 and 5102 StrandVises® do not meet this requirement and were not recommended by Reliable. The original ACCT standard for StrandVise® use on challenge courses was written based on this testing.

In the year 2000, MacLean issued their advisory relating to StrandVise® use on the challenge course, encouraging alternate systems for cable attachments which did not rely on the StrandVise®, most particularly in a situation where the StrandVise® was not properly backed up.

In 2001, there were many communications between ACCT representatives and MacLean, asking for clarification as to the use of the device on the challenge course. No clear answer was ever received from MacLean. ACCT revised the ACCT Installations Standards to align with MacLean's 2000 advisory.

The current advisory asserts that the earlier advisory, of 2000, was misinterpreted. Yet, StrandVises®, presumably with the knowledge of MacLean and its distributors, have been sold to members of the industry since the 2000 advisory. In emails reacting to the current Advisory, reference is made to a recent court case involving a counterfeit StrandVise®. No information has been available to ACCT about a court case involving a challenge course and a StrandVise®. We have learned that MacLean has instituted legal proceedings against some distributors alleging that they are selling counterfeit StrandVises®. One major supplier to the challenge course industry has been removed from those preliminary allegations, and informed by MacLean that they will not condone the sale of StrandVises® to the challenge course industry any longer. Other suppliers, to our knowledge, have as yet heard nothing from MacLean.

What is clear is that StrandVises® are in use on many, many courses, and have been for many years, with little or no evidence of failure. The StrandVise® situation may be analogous to the staple situation – ACCT issued a statement in 2003 that staples, previously held to be appropriate for life support anchors, had been found to be no longer as consistently reliable as we once believed. Courses were encouraged to find other methods to support leading edge climbing – not in a panic mode, but over time, and after consultation with their vendor as to what was the most appropriate substitution for their course. The same course of action will be appropriate for StrandVise® assessment.

We also have learned of a rumor about insurance coverage problems due to the recent Advisory. We have no reason to believe that coverage is being threatened by this Advisory, based on the information we have received from the insurance community.

The most important message that ACCT would like to convey to the challenge course community is that there is no reason to panic over this Advisory. To date, there have been no injuries associated with a StrandVise® installed in compliance with the current ACCT standards. Consult with a well-informed and qualified vendor, and decide what is the appropriate response for your situation. ACCT will continue to validate information received, analyze the situation, and issue additional information as it is available.