

# Safety Recommendations: An Outline (Cable)



## INTRODUCTION

The British Water Ski & Wakeboard Federation Limited ("BWSW") has drawn up some outline recommendations for those who participate in the sport of water skiing and wakeboarding, and, as a checklist, for operators of water ski and wakeboard sites (whether behind the boat or cable). This follows a review with experienced facility owners who are encouraged to contact us with any additional recommendations/input at any time. Safety not only means the safety of those participating in the sport, but also the safety of other water users, general public, spectators etc. However, these recommendations cannot and are not intended to be more than an outline - not least given the different configuration of every site and the different types of participation offered. Each site must carry out its own specific risk assessment and method operating statements to ensure safety and maintain up to date safety rules specific to the site and operations at the site. Water skiing and wakeboarding (whether behind a boat or on cable) is a physically arduous sport requiring the participant to have a good level of fitness and no medical issue that precludes participation. This is of course subject to special arrangements for our much valued adaptive members. For fit and medically sound participants the sport still carries the risk of serious injury and even death. It is imperative therefore that every effort is made to minimise the risk of injury both to participants, site staff and third parties. **These recommendations are subject to all requirements of applicable health and safety legislation.**

These outline recommendations deal with safety and do not address insurance cover. There are separate outline recommendations for behind the boat skiing and riding. Please see more details on insurance for our voluntary clubs on our website: [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk)

For sites with aqua parks the Royal Life Saving Society runs an approval scheme: [www.rlss.org.uk/aqua-parks](http://www.rlss.org.uk/aqua-parks).

## DEFINITIONS

"**Rider**" means any person being towed as part of the cable activities listed below.

*Note – cable water skiers are known as **skiers** but for the purpose of these recommendations ALL participants are referred to as "Riders" to avoid repetition.*

"**Cable**" or "**Cable Tow**" means any cable either "Full Cable System" or "Straight Line Cable System" used to tow a Rider.

"**Inflatable equipment**" means towed water equipment.

## CABLE TOWS

**A Straight Line Cable System (2 Tower System)** is a two tower or point to point cable system which allows Riders to wakeboard or water ski under the constant control and instruction from a coach-operator. The height of the system is far greater than the tow point of any boat – this allows the Rider to be pulled out and on top of the water. The speed of the cable is regulated by an operator and can provide an excellent introduction to the cable discipline. As such the system is often used as a starting point to induct and progress beginners before moving over to a Full Cable System. A Straight Line Cable also has various features (e.g. kickers and sliders) for the more advanced and experienced Rider.

**A Full Cable System** consists of a 4, 5 or 6 corner tower system with two running cables setup in a circular system and a larger expanse of water than is needed for straight line cable system and can cater for multiple Riders at any one time. The speed of the full cable system will be set/run at the discretion of the operator and the speed will be dependant at the type of session being held, accommodating Riders from beginner to advanced skill level. The speed of the cable can be changed and regulated by an operator to accommodate different disciplines and abilities at pre-arranged times i.e. junior Riders club or "slower speed sessions" can be provided to assist beginners with traversing

the corners. A Full Cable also has various features (e.g. kickers and sliders) for the more advanced and experienced Riders (which may also include a slalom course or jump ramp for water skiers).

For both cable systems, all participants must be aware and take account of all site rules or warnings provided in safety briefings and displayed warning signage on site. All cable centres should require participants to complete a properly drafted acknowledgement of risk and consent form (waiver form), prior to participation.

### **Cable Tow Activities**

**The following activities are all considered as cable disciplines:-**

- Wakeboarding
- Water skiing on 2 skis (or 1 ski)
- Cable Ski:
  - Slalom skiing
- Trick skiing
- Jumping
- Wakeskating
- Kneeboarding

### **Inflatable Equipment**

Towed inflatables are sometimes used on Straight Line Cable Systems. Examples of inflatables typically used include:

- Ringos
- Biscuits

### Specific Inflatables Safety Points:

1. Ropes for towing should be covered by cladding to prevent entanglement with participants on the inflatable.
2. Before you change the direction of the inflatable with the cable system, it is important the inflatable comes to a complete stop. Then the operator can slowly tow the inflatable in the opposite direction before increasing the speed.
3. Reference should also be made to the BWSW Guidance on the Use of Towed Inflatables, even though it principally relates to towing of Inflatable Equipment behind a boat.

**ANY POTENTIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN INFLATABLES AND OTHER WATER ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES REFERRED TO IMMEDIATELY BELOW WITHOUT EXCEPTION.**

## **SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES**

All clubs and centres must ensure their safety procedures and protocols are regularly reviewed (including in the context of the specific configuration on their site) and that their safety procedures and protocols are made abundantly clear to participants. There should be a robust paper trail to evidence this.

In addition, all facilities must carry out and regularly review and update as necessary (including if there is any change at all to the configuration of the site or equipment used at the site) risk assessments in relation to the operation of the site and all equipment used at the site. Risk assessments and actions that are identified through the risk assessment process must be documented.

The above should include a water recovery/rescue plan for and injured Rider which is specific to the site including the use of appropriate recovery equipment.

**It is the site owner's sole responsibility on a day to day basis to ensure all activities are carried out safely at their centres, in line with their operating procedures. As stated above these safety recommendations are in addition and supplemental to a site's statutory obligations including all relevant health and safety legislation.**

It is important to note that BWSW does not, and does not purport to, undertake or be responsible for initially reviewing or monitoring members' sites' ongoing compliance with their operating standards. BWSW does not have the expertise or resources to do that, nor is it what BWSW was established to do. The accreditation process does represent a check list for facility owners as regards a number of important identified matters.

BWSW has a basic template on its website for a risk assessment and has commissioned Atlantic Crest, a third party safety consultant, to produce a template normal operating plan including water recovery which are primarily intended for voluntary clubs. These documents are also available on our website.

## **CABLE OPERATOR AND COACHING COURSES**

### **Full Cable (System) Operator (FCO)**

1. All full cable system operators should hold a BWSW Full Cable Operator Qualification. This qualification can be gained via courses and tests at centres throughout the UK. Details of your nearest centre can be obtained from the BWSW website – [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk).

Novice operators and operators in training for a FCO qualification should only be permitted to operate a full cable system if an experienced operator, holding a FCO qualification, is on the dock supervising the activity.

2. Full cable operators should carry a radio or mobile phone (with adequate reception).

The Full Cable Operator manual and syllabus contains valuable information on full cable operating and riding. Copies of the syllabus are available from the BWSW website for FCO Principals ([www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk)).

### **Straight Line (Cable System) Operator (SLO)**

1. All straight line cable system operators should hold a BWSW Straight Line Operator Qualification (SLO Level 1 or Level 2 as appropriate). This qualification can be gained via courses and tests at centres throughout the UK. Details of your nearest centre can be obtained from the BWSW website – [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk).

Novice operators and operators in training for a SLO qualification should only be permitted to operate a straight line cable system if an experienced operator, holding a SLO qualification, is on the dock supervising the activity. BWSW in addition recommends that in any event only operators with such a qualification give lessons to and tow beginners.

2. Straight line cable operators should carry a radio or mobile phone (with adequate reception).
3. Straight line cables should always be operated with an additional person on site. This person should be available to assist with any emergency that may occur.

The straight line operator syllabus contains valuable information on cable operating for straight line cable riding. Copies of the syllabus are available from the BWSW website for SLO Principals – [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk).

**The operating qualifications for both the FCO and SLO do not come with a first aid qualification. To be licenced, an operator will need a first aid certificate. It is the sites responsibility to ensure there is always a qualified first aider on site.**

## Cable Coaching Course

BWSW also provides coaching courses. All coaching should be carried out by suitably experienced people, and it is BWSW's recommendation that all coaching outside of incidental advice / informal input is only done by BWSW licensed coaches and this applies in particular to beginners. Please see the BWSW website [www.bsw.org.uk](http://www.bsw.org.uk) for more details of our coaching courses. It is recognised that not all coaching course candidates will be starting with the same level of experience and expertise and BWSW will seek to accommodate that in the courses offered to the extent possible.

The Cable Coaching Qualification is recommended for cable operators that coach regularly at their site and instruct people to go over kickers and rails. The qualification is intended to meet the standard for coaching unaccompanied at any level within the sport and is therefore recommended to coaches working with participant from beginner to advanced. On successful completion of the qualification, candidates are, subject to the additional items below, deemed to be qualified to coach unassisted in the UK.

**It should be noted that both qualifications have supplementary requirements (which include current first aid, safeguarding and DBS certification). Only those that meet these requirements will be BWSW licenced/qualified coaches.**

### **FIRST AID**

All commercial centres will have their own obligations under health and safety legislation and it is envisaged most facilities will arrange their own first aid courses for staff. BWSW will however seek to connect centres with providers of first aid courses if this is helpful.

### **FULL CABLE SYSTEM: SPECIFIC SAFETY POINTS**

1. Only qualified operators or those under supervision to log their 40 training hours should be at the operator controls (Operators' Manual).
2. Prohibited activities should include intentionally riding close to persons in the water following a fall, riding into the starting area at speed, hitting features without permission/certification, and hitting features when another Rider is in the water nearby.
3. An extra staff member should be on the cable dock to instruct and pass out handles for safe operation during busier periods. This leaves the operator free to focus solely on operating the cable tow safely. There should be no distractions to the operator. In cases like Rider entanglement, seconds count and if the brake is not pulled quickly, serious injury or death can result.
4. If a separate instructor is being used on the dock as suggested, they will be the person to deliver instruction, ensure the Rider is ready to go and then pass this on to the operator. Good communication between the instructor and operator is vital.
5. It is the operator's responsibility to wait for the Rider's signal/confirmation that they are ready and their board or skis are in the correct position on the dock (standing, sliding or sitting) before engaging the carrier for launch. The operator must be certain the launch area of the lake is clear (e.g. if there are persons swimming in the start area following a fall) before a Rider of ANY ability is loaded to launch.
6. It is important for a Rider to always be aware and ride clear of other fallen participants. If there is any doubt of successful evasion, let go of the handle. It is also important to be aware of your surroundings and on the lookout for stray/empty handles when in the water and if you see a free handle coming towards you, move out of the path of the handle, or if there isn't time, duck under the water. Never try to catch a free handle that is coming towards you in the water.

7. **On a seated dock start:** when you are ready to start, ensure that the edge of the board is clear of the dock and let the operator know you are ready. **On a standing dock start (jump start):** when you are ready, let the operator know you are ready and jump when the rope is taut. **On a slip way dock start:** when you are ready to start, ensure that the edge of the board is clear of the dock and let the operator know you are ready.
8. It is recommended that all Riders should have good visibility apparel (e.g. helmet, buoyancy aid or smock etc.) so that in particular they can be seen when they have fallen into the water.

PLEASE ALSO SEE THE GENERAL RULES FOR CABLE PARTICIPATION WHICH FOLLOWS THE SAFETY HAND SIGNALS FOR STRAIGHT LINE CABLE.

**Safety Hand Signals for FULL CABLE:** pay attention to any hand signals given to you in your safety instruction/briefing.

## **STRAIGHT LINE CABLE SYSTEM: SPECIFIC SAFETY POINTS**

1. Only qualified operators or those under supervision, being assessed for the Supervised Training Guide (which is part of the straight line operator's qualification) should be at the operator controls.
2. The operator must test the cable is running correctly and the prohibitors are working correctly before use. When operating the cable ensure that the control box and leads are kept clear, and equipment is not left resting on them.
3. **On a water start:** when you are ready to start, ensure that the edge of the board is out of the water and the rope is taut. Let the operator know you are ready to start. It is important for an operator to use the 2 second 'drag' technique when starting a Rider from the water. **On a sitting dock start:** when you are ready to start, ensure that the edge of the board is clear of the dock and let the operator know you are ready. **On a standing dock start (jump start):** when you are ready let the operator know you are ready and jump when the rope is taut.

PLEASE ALSO SEE THE GENERAL RULES FOR CABLE PARTICIPATION WHICH FOLLOWS THE SAFETY HAND SIGNALS FOR STRAIGHT LINE CABLE.

## **Safety: Concussion**

On 28 April 2023, the Government and the Sport and Recreation Alliance published the first UK-wide **important** Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport which will help all involved in sport to identify and manage concussion. **These need to be taken on board by all involved in the sport.** <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/9ced1e1a-5d3b-4871-9209-bff4b2575b46.pdf>

**Safety Hand Signals for Straight Line Cable** (a copy of the Safety Hand Signals is available for reproduction on the BWSW website)



**FASTER**



**SLOWER**



**SPEED OK**



**SAME SPEED**



**TURN AROUND**



**BACK  
TO DOCK**



**I'M OK**



**STOP**

## General Rules for Safe Cable Tow Participation

### RIDERS

**ALWAYS** be a good swimmer and confident in the water. Cable wakeboarding and water skiing is not an appropriate activity for people who are not good swimmers.

**ALWAYS** wear a buoyancy device suitable for your level of expertise. It must be noted that the buoyancy device is likely not to have any endorsement by any safety agency as it will have been designed to give mobility and flexibility inconsistent with the protection afforded by an approved life jacket. It is essential that all Riders are good swimmers accordingly. However, it will be appreciated that in the event of concussion or unconsciousness that the device will not give the protection of a life jacket and drowning could occur.

**ALWAYS** get instruction of how to leave the dock correctly before attempting a dock start. This also applies for negotiating the turns/corners at either end of the cable.

**ALWAYS** use approved signals between Rider and operator.

**ALWAYS** look where you are going and watch the water ahead of you, at all times.

**ALWAYS** ride clear of obstacles such as fallen branches, buoys, banks and let operator know of any issues etc.

**ALWAYS** let go of the handle on falling.

**ALWAYS** check your equipment is safe and in good condition before riding including buoyancy device, helmet board/skis. bindings, wing nuts, splinters and sharp metal. Be aware of manufacturer's warnings as regards to your equipment, including buoyancy devices.

### CABLE OPERATOR AND SITE OWNERS

**ALWAYS** check that the cable safety equipment (located at the dock or operating station) is working, including emergency stop.

**ALWAYS** test the cable is running correctly and the carrier(s) are running correctly.

**ALWAYS** have an extra staff member on the dock with you when the dock is busy. The operator/site is responsible for determining when this would be appropriate.

**ALWAYS** wear a helmet (any manufacturer's warnings or recommendations should be noted). A correctly sized and suitable helmet should be worn at all times when participating on a cable. A brightly coloured helmet is recommended for visibility reasons. The lack of any third party safety kite mark should be understood and it must be understood that BWSW is not in a position to (and has not undertaken) any review of the protection afforded by helmets.

**ALWAYS** wear neoprene shorts if not wearing a suitable wetsuit.

**ALWAYS** remove jewellery. Loss of limbs have occurred as a result of failure to do so.

**TRY TO** avoid falling forwards.

**TRY TO** recover the board or skies quickly.

**NEVER** attempt a fast landing directly towards the shore or dock – sit down if coming in too fast.

**NEVER** wrap rope around any part of your body (fingers, hand or foot).

**NEVER** place any part of the body through the handle (neck, arm or leg).

**NEVER** ride with the handle held in the crook of your arm.

**NEVER** attempt a feature until properly instructed or signed off by cable operator or coach/instructor.

**NEVER** ride in darkness or otherwise in poor visibility.

**NEVER ride under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**

**ALWAYS** be responsible for maintaining a safe environment.

**ALWAYS** carry a radio or mobile phone (with adequate reception).

**ALWAYS** keep control of the tow rope. Do not throw the handle directly at/to the Rider(s). The handle must be passed to the Rider(s).

**ALWAYS** wait for the Rider's signal/confirmation that they are ready, and

their board is in the correct position in the water or on the dock (standing or sitting) before engaging carrier for launch.

**ALWAYS** remain focused and vigilant so that you can quickly identify and respond to any emergency situation that may arise.

**ALWAYS** remember if in any doubt don't send a Rider out.

**ALWAYS** stop the cable if someone is injured to allow for fast access and unlimited time to deal with the casualty in the water.

**ALWAYS** ensure you progress beginner Riders appropriately to their level and ensure sessions are kept fun.

**ALWAYS** have a safety boat/vessel available for a water rescue, with a qualified member of staff available to operate the safety boat. The boat/vessel should be regularly serviced and checked, and maintenance records held on site.

**ALWAYS** make sure the cable boat/vessel is rescue ready and first aid kits are fully supplied and close by for use.

**ALWAYS** ensure that you are in a suitable position to operate the cable, either standing or seated.

**ALWAYS** regularly maintain the cable in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. Records should be available on site for inspection if required.

**NEVER** increase the speed of the cable for Riders that are not sufficiently experienced enough. Use your experience as an operator to determine a safe speed for the Rider.

**NEVER** allow Riders to use features unless they have competent ability to do so. This

includes determining which features a Rider is suitably experienced to use.

**IT IS IMPERATIVE** that all site owners are able to ensure ready access to their facilities for emergency services in the event of serious injury or incapacity and that the fact of the injury or incapacity can be readily communicated to all relevant parties at the facility and the emergency services. An emergency action plan should be in place and understood by all staff. The "whatthreewords" app may be a good way of confirming location.

**NEVER** operate a cable if there is only one member of staff on site. There should always be an additional person on site available to assist with emergencies, if/when required.

**NEVER** operate a cable or wakeboard in a reckless or negligent manner.

**NEVER** leave the cable tow running unattended.

**NEVER** operate a cable in darkness or otherwise in poor visibility.

**NEVER** let customers on the dock or other members of staff rush you or distract you from the Rider.

**NEVER** pull an injured Rider on to the dock or shore until you are satisfied that they are fit to do so, and no further injury could occur. Emergency procedures must be implemented to recover the injured party or parties using best practise and training.

**NEVER** operate the cable if under the influence of drugs or alcohol.