WAIHANGA ARA RAU
Construction and Infrastructure
Workforce Development Council

INDUSTRIAL ROPE ACCESS

PROPOSAL DOCUMENT – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

OCTOBER 2025

PROPOSAL

The purpose of this document is to seek industry and wider stakeholder feedback on future training for Industrial Rope Access.

This paper proposes a shift in New Zealand's industrial rope access training from a traditional New Zealand Certificate qualification pathway to a micro-credential model. This transition aims to address significant challenges due to low enrolments in existing qualifications, protracted course durations and accessibility to comparable to international models.

The Phase 1 report indicated that industry is looking for credentials that support key skills development, align to voluntary competency requirements administered by SARNZ, contain resources and context for the New Zealand market and ideally, also align to international best practice.

This paper proposes a series of micro-credentials and associated skill standard-based courses at Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels. The focus of the courses will be a combination of technical skills aligned to the current competency scheme, an understanding of New Zealand sector and context and alignment to international best practice.

Competency assessment at the Advanced level will also require a portfolio of work. We also propose the development of additional supplementary skill standards that lead to further competency development and technical leadership for the sector.

This approach meets industry demands for an agile, and technically relevant rope access pathway that supports the current SARNZ competency requirements and meets the needs of local industry and regulations.

Key considerations include:

- Industries preference for the content align to the current New Zealand best practice guidelines, the voluntary certificate of competence scheme administered by SARNZ, while also aligning to international best practice
- The skill standards for Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels, will require candidates to meet the practical competency levels required for employment within the IRA sector
- Transitioning to this new model may pose risks related to delivery continuity

ACTION REQUIRED

We seek industry and public feedback on the proposals contained in the paper as well as wider feedback on alternative options.

BASIC – ROPE ACCESS

(NZQA Level 3)

Target Audience
- Individuals new to rope access
- Those seeking entry-level certification in industrial climbing and access
- Workers transitioning from related fields (e.g., construction, arborist, rescue)

Prerequisites
Working at height
Working at height rescue

Duration
5 days+ (including training and assessment)

Core Competency Areas
- Rope Access Fundamentals
- Safe use of rope systems
- Basic knots, hitches, PPE and equipment handling
- Basic rigging and anchor setup
- Ascending, descending, changeovers
- Use of backup systems and fall protection
- Manoeuvre through rope systems
- Tool handling, communication, and team awareness
- Worksite Conduct (awareness only)
- New Zealand Code of practice, regulations and standards
- Job documentation
- Follow safety instructions and report hazards
- Introduction to rescue principles
- Casualty handling and descent rescue

Day 1. Introduction & Safety
- Workplace supervision
- Rope access principles
- Knots, hitches and handling
- Care and maintenance of equipment
- PPE and equipment familiarisation (incorporates equipment selection, pre-checking, assembly and buddy check)
- Use of backup systems
- Safe use of descenders and ascenders
- Ascending and descending ropes
- Changeovers

Day 2: Rigging and Manoeuvres
- Regulations and standards
- Rope system dynamics – redundancy in rope access
- Anchor selection
- Basic anchor
- Load-shared anchor systems
- Hazard avoidance and edge protection
- Approach an edge with restraint techniques
- Passing an edge
- Double deviation
- Rope to rope transfer
- Re-anchors
- Passing mid-rope knots
- Passing mid-rope protection

Day 3: Climbing and Rescue
- Basic rescue principles
- Rescue and emergency plans (awareness only)
- Code of Practice overview
- Fall arrest lanyards
- Climbing with type 1 devices
- Work positioning on structure
- Lowering on a pre-rigged system
- Horizontal aid climbing
- Casualty handling and controls for a suspended casualty
- Descent rescue techniques

Day 4: Practice and Repetition
- hazard identification and risk assessment (awareness only)
- hazard zones & authorisations (awareness only)
- Safe method statement (awareness only)
- Full technique review
- Troubleshooting common errors
- Self-reflection with feedback

Day 5: Assessment
Assessment against skill standards.

Concurrent SARNZ Independent VOC assessment where applicable.

Optional supplementary Domain-specific skills

Geotechnical, Building Maintenance, Painting and Preparation, Glazing Repairs etc

INTERMEDIATE – ROPE ACCESS

(NZQA Level 4)

Target Audience
- Basic Rope Access training NZQA Level 3
- Holders of SARNZ Level 3 CoC
- Holders of IRATA Level 1
- Technicians seeking to expand their operational scope and take on more responsibility
- Individuals preparing for supervisory roles or complex job tasks

Prerequisites
Basic Rope Access Micro-credential, or equivalent knowledge and skills.

Duration
5 days (including training and assessment)

Core Competency Areas
- Elevated Rigging
- Tension Lines Rigging
- Entry & Escape Rigging
- Rescue Rigging
- Hauling systems & cross haul
- Manoeuvre Rescues
- Hauling Rescue
- Risk assessments and method statements

Day 1: Review
- Role in the team
- Pre-start checks (people, equipment, anchors and rope systems)
- Demonstrate all Level 1 skills and knowledge.
- Rescue from ascent mode
- Risk assessments and method statements
- Sources of emergency on a rope access worksite
- Permit to work systems
- Toolbox talks and team briefings
- Assessment: Written task: prepare a method statement

Day2: Manoeuvre Rescues & Intro to Hauling
- Passing a deviation with a casualty
- Rope to rope transfer with a casualty
- Passing a re-anchor with a casualty
- Key loading and rating concepts
- Mechanical advantage systems
- Pulley systems
- Calculate theoretical mechanical advantage.

Day 3: Hauling Rescue Techniques
- Rescue from an aid climb
- Vertical limited free-fall arrest line rigging
- Rescue from fall arrest equipment
- Hanging haul rescue
- Cross haul Rescue
- Inter-team coordination
- Risk assessments and method statements (job plans creation)

Day 4: Tension Line System, Skill Practice
- Key tension line risk factors and the corresponding mitigations
- Rigging and using tension lines
- Full technique review
- Troubleshooting common errors
- Practice

Day 5: Assessment
Assessment against skill standards.

Concurrent SARNZ Independent VOC assessment where applicable.

Optional supplementary skills

First aid

Equipment inspections
New skill standard (not a replacement for US19359) as is targeting third-party inspections (self-inspection is part of the core list)
- Equipment care and inspection - requirements for detailed and interim recorded inspections of equipment and the source of requirements
- Defect identification - the requirements around identifying, isolating, removing and disposing of faulty equipment
- Purchasing, conformity, fit for purpose, compatible
- Disposal methods and responsibility

Options for Domain-specific SS
New skill standard contextualised for work context: Rigging, underslung deck, salvage, advanced coatings and repairs, Inspection Non Destructive Testing, Turbine Blade Repair, EMF RF

ADVANCED + – ROPE ACCESS TECHNICAL LEAD

(NZQA Level 5)

Target Audience
- Aspiring rope access managers, safety supervisors, and technical leads
- Holders of SARNZ Level 4 CoC
- Holders of IRATA Level 2

Prerequisites
Intermediate Rope Access Micro-credential, or equivalent knowledge and skills.

Must complete a portfolio of work prior to course attendance.

Duration
5 days on site (including training and assessment)
Plus portfolio work.

Core Competency Areas
- Technical leadership
- External coordination
- H&S leadership
- Rescue planning
- Rescue problem solving
- Safety, support and coordination

Day 1: Refresher / Demonstrate Previous Levels
- All Intermediate Operator / IRATA level 1 techniques
- All Advanced Operator / IRATA Level 2 techniques

Day 2. Level 3 Rescues and Scenarios
- Mid-transfer rescue
- Passing mid-rope knots with a casualty
- Use of tension lines for rescue
- Rescue from aid

Day 3: Practice Variations and Complications
- Advanced Operator / Level 2 rescue variations
- Combination exercises
- Mid-transfer rescue
- Passing mid-rope knots with a casualty
- Use of tension lines for rescue
- Rescue from vertical aid (short connection)
- Team scenario and exercises

Day 4: Coordinate a Team
- Identification of hazards and risks and mitigation (controls)
- Planning and documenting safe work - Job planning, method statements, people, assignment of task duties
- Requirements of managing non-standard events or situations beyond standard protocols
- Planning for emergencies
- Incident management and reporting
- Practice weak areas
- Assessment: Complex team rescue /exercise
- Requirements for competence and supervision (application)

Day 5: Assessment
Assessment against skill standards

Portfolio work
Assessment completed portfolio including:

1. At Work Evidence
   - Risk assessments
   - Method statements
   - Equipment inspection logs
   - Team leadership and communication, photos, job details, expected vs actual outcomes
   - Monitor team compliance with safety procedures
   - Incident reports

2. Planning Skill Demonstration

   Prepare theoretical method statements for four scenarios:

   Calculate component forces. Identify key stages, risks and requirements. Identify team and equipment needs, communication requirements and potential responses to an emergency at any stage in the work.

   - Prepare a plan for an advanced rigging and rescue system that transitions workers below a suspended tension line
   - Prepare a plan for an advanced rigging and rescue evacuation off a structure for 3 workers, where there is no one left at the top and everyone can be recovered

- Prepare a plan for an advanced rigging and rescue system that requires transition past deviated tension lines
- Prepare a 250kg load movement plan that transitions a load up from an embankment, horizontally under a bridge, and down the other embankment. The load's final position is under a fragile overhang.

Optional Supplementary skills

Rope Access Supervision & Legislation
(NZQA Level 5)

- Rope access methods are to be valid and suitable alternatives to rope access for circumstances
- Reasonably practicable
- Controls for management of risk
- The monitoring of adequate controls
- Notification and reporting requirements
- Worksite authorisation methods and when they apply
- Controls for the management of dropped objects
- Key legislative worker duties
- Controls for the management of PPE
- Worker duties in relation to PPE
- Workers' rights regarding risk in the workplace
- Requirements for competence and supervision (overview)

Rope Access Operations and Business

- Compliance and audit readiness
- Operations
- Equipment management requirements and their sources
- Prescribed risks

Hauling & Rope dynamics Theory

- Tension line dynamics and calculating forces at a component level
- Key configurations/situations in hauling and tension line systems where failure is most likely to occur
- Load testing, hauling systems, and mechanical advantage - multiple forms of mechanical advantage - calculate the actual mechanical advantage in hauling systems.

Anchor Installation and Constructed Anchors
New skill standard based on 32196 & 19369

- Types and requirements for anchor systems, including their limitations and the sources of these requirements
- Load sharing and deviation anchors
- Anchor system design
- Static vs dynamic loading situations
- Anchors vs Anchorage
- Counterbalance equations and Levers
- Counterweight Needle set up
- Tripos Set up

Pre-hospital Emergency Care (PHEC) – currently a 3-5-day course

Technical Rescue –
New skills – attendant-based rescue, stretcher and high-angle deviations.

Multiple options for Domain specific SS
Specialist access planning, Third-party rescue support