



ANRARA

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SUBJECT

VEHICLE CONSTRUCTION ISSUES AND USE OF CUTTERS

At the 2000 Australian National RAR Challenge in Mt Gambier, South Australia a number of technical construction differences were noted on the vehicles supplied by Holden for the event. These have been summarised here for the benefit of ANRARA members:

1. Adjustable seat belt mounts on B & C pillars

Rescuers should be aware that adjustable seat belt mounts are often associated with additional metal inside the pillar to provide greater strength as an anchor point. In the case of the Holden supplied vehicles at the competition it was noted that this strengthening was in the form of a 'C' channel that ran near the full length of the pillar. The additional material forming this 'C' channel was found not to connect at either the base or top of the pillar (i.e. it was spot welded in the centre section).

It was further noted that some teams encountered difficulty with some hydraulic cutters in cutting through the additional material, in particular, combination cutter/spreader tools had more difficulty than dedicated single action tools.

In view of the discovery that the additional material does not run the full length of the pillar, rescuers are encouraged to consider making cuts on pillars with adjustable seat belt mounts with this in mind. That is, as high on the top of the pillar and as low at the base of the pillar as practicable to reduce the amount of material that has to be cut.

2. Cosmetic external body panels

With advent of vehicle design changes, more light weight flexible materials (e.g. plastic) is being used to create the overall external vehicle shape around a light steel frame or chassis. As a consequence vehicle stabilisation at a rescue is becoming a more complex task.

During the Mt Gambier competition it was noted that many teams were stabilising vehicles using blocks to support the vehicle at a point covered by a plastic moulded panel. The end result was distortion of the panel and ineffective stabilisation of the vehicle.

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Rescuers are urged to hone their knowledge in the field of vehicle construction to ensure they are able to identify such panel before commencing stabilisation. Possible solutions include:

- Using manufacturer identified jacking points for stabilisation
- Cutting the panel away to access the more solid framework of the vehicle it hides to provide a better point to stabilise off.

Above all, rescuers are reminded that they should use their initiative and assess each scenario on its merits to ensure the best possible outcome for the casualty.

SOURCE
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