Question:

Can two IRATA International Level 1 rope access technicians can carry out a job without the need for a Level 2 or 3?

Answer:

IRATA International

The Level 1, 2 and 3 designations stem from the *IRATA International* training and certification scheme. Under this scheme, only Level 3 rope access technicians are permitted to be rope access safety supervisors[1]. IRATA also state (Clause 1.4.2.3.1):

"There should be proper supervision of the worksite. Worksites using rope access require the supervision of rope access safety and of the work project itself. These two types of supervision may be the responsibility of different people or the same person. This code of practice covers only the supervision of rope access safety".

British Standards

BS 7985: 2013[2] (that should be read in conjunction with BS ISO 22846-1: 2003[3] and BS ISO 22846-2: 2012[4]) states (12.3.2.1):

"… all work teams should be properly supervised and be self-supporting. A work team should, therefore, consist of at least two members. One member of the work team should be a supervisor … When operating on a worksite with more than one discrete working area, adequate supervision should be provided for each of those discrete areas …".

BS ISO 22846-1: 2003 states (3.1):

"… The principles described in this clause are some of the key elements for such a safe system of work. There may be other requirements, depending on the work situation and the work task being performed.
Key elements of a safe system of work include, but are not limited to, the following:

- proper management and planning;
- use of trained, competent persons with proper levels of supervision …".

BS ISO 22846-2: 2012 states:

" … There should always be effective management, including on-site supervision …" (3.2 a)).

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1 IRATA International code of practice for industrial rope access, Part 1: Foreword, Introduction, Scope, Structure, Terms and definitions, Principles and controls, 2013 Edition (Clause 1.4.2.3.2)
2 BS 7985: 2013, Code of practice for the use of rope access methods for industrial purposes – Recommendations and guidance supplementary to BS ISO 22846
3 BS ISO 22846-1: 2003, Personal equipment for protection against falls — Rope access systems, Part 1: Fundamental principles for a system of work
4 BS ISO 22846-2: 2012, Personal equipment for protection against falls — Rope access systems, Part 2: Code of practice

"… Table 1 shows the responsibility of rope access personnel and the classification of operatives, and provides terms for such personnel, which are used throughout this part of ISO 22846 …" (4.1, Underlying principles).

Table 1 — Responsibility of rope access personnel	
Title	**Responsibility**
Operative	May carry out specific work tasks under supervision
Supervisor [a]	Able to implement a safe working system for a particular worksite
Manager [b]	Able to define and operate a safe system of work applicable to more than one worksite
a The rope access supervisor should always possess the highest level of practical rope access skills required for the task being undertaken.	
b The rope access manager and rope access supervisor may be the same person.	

Furthermore, BS ISO 22846-2: 2012 states (in Clause 4.9.2, Supervision):

"… It is essential that rope access supervisors have the experience and competence to supervise the rope access work and any potential rescue for each particular rope access project under their supervision. For the competence requirements of a rope access supervisor, see 5.5.3 …".

4.10 Levels of rope access operative skills

"… 4.10.1 The result of the planning process undertaken should reflect the classification of the worksite; see 4.8 and the required operative skills.
4.10.2 The skills of operatives and the training received by them for a particular worksite classification or work situation should be assessed by the rope access supervisor before the operatives are allowed to work at any worksite …".

5.5.3 Competence of rope access supervisor

"… 5.5.3.2 Differing levels of supervisory skills can be required for access tasks of differing complexity. This is especially so where considering the response to and control of emergency situations, but may also be relevant where the work task is complex or possibly hazardous, i.e. use of chemicals, confined spaces and dangerous tools.
NOTE With some tasks, there can be a requirement for additional supervision unrelated to rope access, e.g. entering confined spaces.
5.5.3.3 The rope access supervisor should only allow rope access work to be carried out by competent operatives and in the manner set out in the documentation for the project.
5.5.3.4 Various jurisdictions can have specific requirements for supervisors, but the following general principles apply. It is important for the rope access supervisor to: …".

5.6 Rope access team size

"… 5.6.2 For each work situation, the level of rope access supervision, the minimum and maximum number of the operatives in the work team and their skills should be assessed and established.

5.6.3 A work team should consist of at least two members, one of whom is a rope access supervisor …"

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WAHR)

The WAHR require:

Competence
5. Every employer shall ensure that no person engages in any activity, including organisation, planning and supervision, in relation to work at height or work equipment for use in such work unless he is competent to do so or, if being trained, is being supervised by a competent person.

Avoidance of risks from work at height
6.—(1) In identifying the measures required by this regulation, every employer shall take account of a risk assessment under regulation 3 of the Management Regulations.

In short:

- "Levels" are not mandated (although HSE is likely to use the standards set by IRATA International and/or the BS ISOs as a 'benchmark').
- The measures that need to be taken, including consideration of the competencies required, should be 'risk-based' (with the legislation often referred to as being 'goal setting').

heightec Courses

If the IRATA Courses are not deemed suitable, two non-IRATA courses are run (subject to availability):

ISO Rope Access - User

This course is:

"… based broadly on the requirements of BS ISO 22846 for the purpose of undertaking rope access classified as **"simple"**. Characteristics of a safe system of work, including equipment, legal requirements, objective hazards, risk assessment and method statements, conformity and certification, inspection, emergency considerations and rescue procedures …".

It is:

"… (an) entry level course designed for those who have specific trade skills but wish to use rope access as a method of gaining access to their worksite. **After the course candidates will be able to set up their own suspension system under the supervision of a rope access supervisor** …".

and covers:

"… Basic principles of movement on ropes - ascent, descent, changing from ascent to descent, changing from rope to rope, passing a deviation, use of a back-up system, elementary rigging and rope management, elementary rescue …".

ISO Rope Access - Supervisor

Again, this course is:

"… based broadly on the requirements of BS ISO 22846 for the purpose of undertaking rope access classified as **"simple"**. It provides detailed knowledge of applicable legislation, competence in inspection and care of equipment, casualty care, risk assessment and method statements and site management requirements …".

It is:

"… (an) advanced course for candidates who already have a rope access qualification and significant work experience. **For persons supervising non-hazardous work tasks in straightforward environments with vertical, simple drops**…".

It covers:

"… A full range of technical and/or complex access and rigging techniques, including fall protection methods, advanced rescue, lead climbing and application of pulley systems …".

Candidates must:

"… possess a suitable certificate of competence at **User Level** and must have 1,000 hours experience over 1 year documented prior experience in an appropriate work environment ...".

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