

The BSA Climbing/Rappelling Program

The Climbing/Rappelling Program covers climbing and rappelling on rock faces, towers, vertical and horizontal walls, and all bouldering and free climbing. It applies to any rock face, climbing gym, wall, or tower, at any height. In 2000, the BSA-National Council issued new policies and procedures for this Program, patterned after the BSA Safe Swim Defense Plan, to be followed when Scouts are doing any of the above activities. A failure to comply with them can put members of the Unit at unnecessary risk and invalidate insurance coverage by the BSA, leaving both the Unit leader and the Unit sponsor liable and without the protection of the BSA.

A Unit that does any activity that is covered by this Program must do all of the following things to be in compliance with BSA-National Council policies and requirements.

- ◆ Complete an application, noting climbing as a part of the activity, and receive an approved Tour Permit from the Council's Camping Department.
- ◆ Have a registered Unit leader, 21 or older, who is trained in, and committed to compliance with, the eight points of the Climb On Safely procedure.
- ◆ Have two certified instructors (as defined in Climb On Safely), or a certified instructor and a **climbing director**, who are present and supervising all activities in the area at all times when Scouts are climbing. Each instructor/**director** can only supervise six Scouts. Therefore, a group of more than 12 Scouts must have an additional instructor for each additional 1-6 Scouts, e.g., 3 instructors for 13-18 Scouts, 4 instructors for 19-24 Scouts, etc.
- ◆ Have two spotters for each person who is free climbing or bouldering on any rock or wall/face up to his/her height. Climbing to a height greater than that requires the use of ropes.

Even when the climbing/rappelling is at a commercial climbing center or is under the direction of a certified climbing school, the Unit Leadership is still responsible for ensuring that all of the activity is in compliance with these BSA policies.

These policies apply to all organized climbing and rappelling activities. With the proper precautions, the use of rope as an aid to safely cross a stream, traverse a trail hazard, or climb up or down a steep slope while hiking or backpacking does not fall under them. However, when the use of rope for climbing and/or rappelling is a planned part of that activity, the policies apply.

The LAAC-High Adventure Team recommends that Unit Leadership also take the following actions as part of a Climbing/Rappelling Program.

- ◆ Arrange with a local American Red Cross (ARC) Chapter for all participants to take its course, "First Aid - When Help Is Delayed". This two-hour module may be taken by anyone, and is recommended to leaders in Climb On Safely. Persons who desire an ARC Certification for it must hold current ARC first aid and CPR Certifications.
- ◆ Provide an orientation for all participants, prior to each outing, which stresses safe practices, discipline, and self-control ... attitude, attitude, attitude.
- ◆ Conduct all matters related to climbing/rappelling in a reasonable and prudent manner.

Any questions about The BSA Climbing/Rappelling Program as an approved activity for a Scout Unit are to be directed to Tony Enterante, Director of Camping Services, Los Angeles Area Council, 310-413-4400, x 241. Two BSA publications discuss it and these policies, Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual and Climb On Safely. The BSA-National Council recommends Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills, Steven Cox and Kris Fulsaa (editors), The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA, 2003, as the reference for climbing matters not covered in BSA literature.

Program Announcement 25