

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. A failure to comply with them can put members of the Unit at unnecessary risk and the Unit Leaders violating BSA National Council policy.

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.

- ◆ Have a registered Unit leader, 21 or older, who is trained in, and committed to compliance with, the eight points of Climb On Safely.
- ◆ Have two qualified instructors (as defined in Climb On Safely), who are present and supervising all activities in the area at all times when Scouts are climbing. Each instructor can only supervise six Scouts. Therefore, a group of more than 12 Scouts must have an additional instructor for each additional 6 Scouts, e.g., 3 instructors for 12-18 Scouts, 4 instructors for 18-24 Scouts, etc.
- ◆ Have spotters when appropriate for each person who is free climbing or bouldering on any rock or wall/face up to his/her shoulder 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 GLAAC Climbing Committee recommends that Unit Leadership also take the following actions as part of a Climbing/Rappelling Program.

- ◆ Take a local American Red Cross (ARC) Wilderness First Aid course.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Wear Helmets while participating in all climbing/rappelling activities, including bouldering.
- ◆ Not use rope under 10mm in diameter.

Any questions about The BSA Climbing/Rappelling Program as an approved activity for a Scout Unit are to be directed to the Director of Camping Services, Greater Los Angeles Area Council, (626) 351-8815 or Dale Whitten via e-mail at agr8driver@aol.com. Two BSA publications discuss it and these policies, Belay On 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