

Orange County Council BSA Climbing & Rappelling Policy

With the introduction of the Climbing Merit Badge, Climb on Safely and Topping Out, the Boy Scouts of America has policy or procedures for almost every possible climbing or rappelling situation. In addition, the BSA web site has a Scouting and Climbing fact sheet that clears up some policy; minimum of two climbing instructors for any BSA climbing or rappelling activity. The Ventura County Council Climbing and Rappelling Policy Standards meet or exceed the National B.S.A. Policies in effect January 01, 2001. This document is meant to establish policy where there is no coverage by the above referenced literature. The following policies are mandatory for the conduct of all climbing and/or rappelling programs or events on council property and when Ventura County Council units conduct climbing or rappelling activities at off-council properties.

Participants shall be in compliance with the applicable Ventura County Council Policy, National Standards, and the BSA *Climb On Safely* and *Topping Out* Climbing/Rappelling publications. In the case of conflict between the listed applicable publications, the more conservative rule shall apply. The camp ranger (or his designee), a climbing director, or the camp health and safety chairman will direct operations to cease if these standards are not followed.

During unit activities, if the unit is a member of the Ventura County Council the director or instructor in charge must be trained for that activity in a Ventura County Council (or higher, such as NCS) training program and have the council training card with them during the activity. If the unit is from another council, the director or instructor must be in compliance with the standards set by the BSA *Climb on Safely* publication and have the documentation with him during the activity. The leader(s) must brief everyone as to what is to be accomplished and review proper voice commands before entering the climbing activity area. Persons with serious medical problems should have approval from a physician to participate and provide that information to the head instructor, and an emergency communication plan must be in place for every activity.

Rappelling requires supervision by at least one qualified director or instructor and two assistants. Climbing requires supervision by at least one qualified director or instructor and one assistant. Only one participant is permitted to climb or rappel on a route at a time, and each participant must be observed throughout the entire event by at least one trained leader. Activities in a rock area will not be conducted when the surface is wet.

Horseplay should never be encouraged, permitted, or tolerated while the program is being conducted. Rappelling has the highest accident rate of any climbing activity. To ensure the highest degree of safety, no speedy or bounding descent that places a strain on the anchors, the rope, and/or the belayer will be used, nor will arm, body, Australian, or assault face-first rappelling be taught or used. A rappeller will not jump from the top edge in an assault or emergency type of rappel.

For a climb on an artificial surface or with a single rope rappel, the belay line may be clipped to the harness with a carabiner utilizing a figure eight on a bight, or tied directly to the harness with a figure eight follow-through knot. The belay line used for a climber on a natural surface must be attached with a figure eight follow-through, either directly through the front of the harness or as recommended by the harness manufacturer.

Every person in the safety zone must wear a UIAA or CE approved rock-climbing helmet with the chin strap secured when rappelling, climbing, belaying, or observing. When using a camp climbing wall or tower or any time when the use of camp equipment is furnished as required by national standards, participants may not use personal equipment. The only exception is that a person may use a personal helmet or harness if that item is (a) UIAA or CE approved and designed for climbing, and; (b) Inspected and approved by the on-site climbing director or lead instructor prior to that activity.

Discussed and approved.

Approved on

Approved on

Approved, Chairman, High Adventure Team _____

Approved, Chairman, Camping Committee _____

Approved, Chairman, Vice President, Operations _____

Approved, Council Executive _____