FACT SHEET

Scouting and Climbing

Background

During the summer of 1995, youth participants in the National Junior Leader Instructor Camp held at Philmont Scout Ranch identified climbing as an increasingly popular activity. They requested the development of program literature by the Boy Scouts of America in support of climbing. In May 1997, the first edition of the *Climbing* merit badge pamphlet was released and proved to be extremely popular.

In September 1997, a national climbing task force was organized, and members met for the first time to discuss suggestions they received regarding climbing techniques and appropriate safety measures. Their vision was to develop climbing literature and training for units and councils. As a result, Climb On Safely was developed and made available in fall 1998. Similar to Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat, Climb On Safely is designed to orient adult leaders with the proper procedure for organizing and managing BSA climbing/rappelling activities for their units.

In the two years following Climb On Safely's introduction, the climbing task force developed additional materials for use by Scouts and leaders. These included the Climb On Safely Training Outline, a revised Climbing merit badge pamphlet, Climbing/Rappelling National Standards, *Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual*, and a Climbing Lesson Plan for a Climbing section at National Camping School.

Climb On Safely

Designed for unit climbing/rappelling, Climb On Safely, No. 20-099, is the BSA's recommended procedure for organizing and managing climbing and rappelling activities at all levels of the Scouting program: Tiger Cubs, Cub Scouting, Webelos Scouting, Boy Scouting, Varsity Scouting, and Venturing. It offers guidance for climbing and rappelling at natural sites and at specifically designed facilities, including climbing towers and fixed and portable walls. Climb On Safely addresses has eight points to help ensure the safety and well-being of participants.

1. Qualified Supervision
2. Qualified Instructors
3. Physical Fitness
4. Safe Area
5. Equipment
6. Planning
7. Environmental Conditions
8. Discipline

Climb On Safely is not designed to prepare leaders to instruct BSA youth in the skills of climbing or rappelling. Teaching climbing or rappelling requires a trained climbing instructor who meets the criteria defined in Climb On Safely.

Climb On Safely Training Outline

The Climb On Safely Training Outline, No. 20-101A, is designed for a trainer to teach adult Scouters how to implement the eight points of Climb On Safely for unit climbing/rappelling activities. This orientation can be conducted by anyone who has an interest in climbing or rappelling; it does not require a skilled climber or rappeller. Training in Climb On Safely takes about 40 minutes and can be done at a roundtable or summer camp or in conjunction with other unit leader training.

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Climbing Merit Badge

The Climbing merit badge, is an optional merit badge that a Scout may earn toward the attainment of the Star, Life, and Eagle ranks, as well as for Eagle Palms. The contents and requirements for the *Climbing* merit badge pamphlet, No. 35001B, are updated on a periodic basis. Photographs and illustrations depict climbing/rappelling techniques recommended by the Boy Scouts of America.

Topping Out

Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual, No. 32007, describes and illustrates the climbing and rappelling techniques recommended by the Boy Scouts of America. Where appropriate, several alternative techniques are covered. The recommendations in the current edition of Topping Out supersede those in all previous BSA publications. Topping Out is designed as a resource to guide BSA climbing directors and instructors in teaching others proper bouldering, climbing, rappelling, and anchoring procedures and techniques. It is an appropriate resource for all BSA climbing/rappelling activities wherever they are conducted.

Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

The current-year Climbing/Rappelling National Standards apply to all council and district climbing/rappelling activities where multiple units participate. Climbing/rappelling activities include climbing/rappelling towers, vertical walls, horizontal walls, bouldering, and related programs. Programs that operate one week or more are required to be visited. A Project COPE or climbing inspector is empowered to visit the climbing/rappelling program and make recommendations to the councils.

National Camping School Climbing Section

Each region offers at least two weeklong climbing sections at National Camping School. Participants who successfully complete this section will be issued a certificate of completion of training as a BSA climbing director. A climbing director must be at least 21 years of age. Over a period of at least three days, climbing directors are empowered to train BSA climbing instructors who are at least 18 years of age.

A BSA climbing director or BSA lead climbing instructor who is at least 21 years of age must supervise the BSA climbing/rappelling site. A Project COPE director may supervise a climbing tower, but is not authorized to train climbing instructors. A minimum of two BSA climbing directors and/or BSA climbing instructors must be present during the operation of any BSA climbing or rappelling activity. Each BSA climbing director or BSA climbing instructor supervises no more than six participants, including adult leaders, in climbing or rappelling.