

# 2005 Climbing/Rappelling

## NATIONAL STANDARDS BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA



These standards apply to council and district climbing/rappelling activities. *Climb On Safely*, No. 20-099B, applies to unit activities. *Topping Out*, No. 32007, is the Boy Scouts of America's manual of recommended climbing practices.

# 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards



These standards are designed to ensure a high degree of health and safety for participants and staff members engaged in climbing/rappelling programs operated by the Boy Scouts of America. Climbing/rappelling programs include natural rock sites, climbing/rappelling towers, vertical walls, horizontal walls, bouldering, portable facilities, and related programs. These standards apply to all local council and district climbing/rappelling activities where multiple units engage in the activity. Only programs that operate one week or more are required to be visited by a regional visitation team.

Equipment, facilities, staff qualifications, and training, as well as operation of the program, should be reviewed during the annual summer camp visitation. This inspection must be conducted by a trained regional climbing/rappelling inspector or Project COPE inspector. The Project COPE visitation team is empowered to inspect both climbing/rappelling and Project COPE facilities and activities. The climbing/rappelling site is also inspected annually by a climbing director and members of the council climbing committee. Climbing/rappelling program sites or facilities on council property that are not part of a summer camp operation must be inspected at least once a year by a trained climbing director or inspector from outside the BSA local council. A BSA regional visitation team submits written recommendations to the council identifying facilities, procedures, and instruction techniques that need to be changed.

Climbing/rappelling programs may be inspected at a time other than during the national resident camp visitation. The regions have trained climbing/rappelling or Project COPE inspectors who will inspect the courses.

All mandatory (M) standards must be met to operate a climbing/rappelling program. Any event or activity that does not meet one or more mandatory standards must be closed until compliance is achieved.

*Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual*, No. 32007 (available through the Supply Division), will serve as the reference for these standards. A section of National Camping School is offered for the climbing directors referred to in these standards.

Quality standards are desirable practices essential to a quality climbing/rappelling program.

The following items should be available to the visitation team.

1. Results of last inspection of the course and corrective action taken.
2. Log of the history of each rope and length of webbing used in the program.
3. Equipment record and inventory.
4. Reports of injuries and close calls involving participants in the climbing/rappelling program. These records should be kept for at least 15 years.
5. Maintenance checklist of facilities and equipment.
6. Proof of training of the climbing director and instructors.
7. Climbing/rappelling staff training plan.
8. Checklist of programs each instructor is qualified to lead.
9. Proof of training and CPR training of at least one climbing staff member.
10. Rules and safety procedures for each event.
11. Procedures for opening and concluding climbing/rappelling program sessions.
12. Emergency plan and procedures.
13. Inspection report on new facilities.
14. *Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual*, No. 32007.

## Classes of Climbing/Rappelling Practices and Procedures

Several levels of climbing practices and procedures may apply in specific situations:

### Required

The *Climbing/Rappelling National Standards* are required for all council and district climbing/rappelling activities. The points of *Climb On Safely*, No. 20-099B, are required for all unit climbing/rappelling activities.

### Recommended

*Topping Out*, No. 32007, contains recommended practices and procedures for both council/district and unit climbing/rappelling activities. These have been determined to have a high degree of safety and are commonly used.

### Prohibited

A few climbing/rappelling practices and procedures are prohibited because they have been determined not to be safe; they are described in the *Climbing/Rappelling National Standards*, *Climb On Safely*, and *Topping Out*.

### Acceptable

Because there is such a variety of climbing/rappelling practices and procedures, some are simply acceptable—not required, recommended, or prohibited. Just because a practice is not described in *Topping Out* does not necessarily mean that it is not acceptable. The council's climbing committee chairperson should be consulted regarding climbing/rappelling practices and procedures that may be questionable.

## Summary of Changes in 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

Several changes were made to these standards for 2005. Additions and changes made include:

Standard **M3** corrects the telephone number for the Association for Challenge Course Technology: 269-685-6350. The standard also adds that portable climbing/rappelling structures must be securely anchored and/or guyed, including mobile climbing facilities. The manufacturer's recommendations for using portable and mobile facilities, including automatic belay systems, should be followed.

Standard **M4** is now mandatory.

Standard **M19** deletes that a first-aid kit must be readily available and accessible to all staff members. This requirement is addressed in standard **M51**.

Standard **M25** adds that all climbing helmets must be retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations or no more than seven years from the date of purchase, or

sooner if conditions warrant it. The statement in standard **M29** that calls for the same has been deleted to avoid duplication.

The portion of standard **M26** that states, "Anchor systems must have a strength of at least 22.2 kiloNewtons (5,000 pounds). (Webbing may be doubled to meet this standard.)" has moved to standard **M23** without further change.

Standard **M30** clarifies that brake bars on carabiners are prohibited.

Standard **M32** adds that climbing directors and instructors regularly inspect climbing/rappelling equipment and are taught how to inspect equipment for defects that render equipment unsafe for usage.

Standard **M45** clarifies that procedures are in effect to check and double-check participants' knots, carabiners, and harnesses before each use.

## 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

(Conducted once a calendar year)

Standard	Yes	No	Comments
<b>I. PROGRAM SITE/FACILITY</b>			
M1	A climbing/rappelling facility on BSA property must be monitored or secured to prevent unauthorized use (disabled to a height of at least 12 feet or otherwise disabled). Warning signs must be posted at designated climbing/rappelling sites. Climbing and rappelling must be done with qualified supervision.		
M2	Climbing or rappelling at natural sites must be done on stable rock that is suitable for climbing and rappelling. Climbing and rappelling sites have been reviewed and approved by a climbing director. The climbing area has a designated place for onlookers that is outside the safety zone.		
M3	Constructed facilities must meet ACCT standards (Association for Challenge Course Technology, P.O. Box 255, Martin, MI 49070-0255; phone 269-685-0670; fax 269-685-6350; annual membership includes ACCT standards) for belay cables and terminations, ground anchors, guy cables, and poles, as well as applicable state and local laws. Portable climbing/rappelling structures must be securely anchored and/or guyed, including mobile climbing facilities. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for using portable and mobile facilities, including automatic belay systems. Climbing/rappelling surfaces must not have protruding hardware, such as screws.		
M4	Each climbing/rappelling structure must be inspected by a structural engineer, challenge course builder who is a professional vendor member of ACCT (Association for Challenge Course Technology), or a professional challenge course builder, before initial use, within the last four years, and after any severe stress such as high winds or lightning. A written document is available that has been signed by the structural engineer or ACCT challenge course builder indicating that in his or her opinion the facility is structurally suitable for its intended purpose.		
M5	The climbing/rappelling site is free of distractions from other program areas and from potential hazards such as dead snags, power lines, insects, vehicular traffic, and other identifiable hazards that could endanger climbers, belayers, rappellers, or onlookers. A well-planned trail system enables participants to walk safely to and from the climbing site.		
6	The climbing/rappelling site or facility has climbing routes that vary in difficulty to accommodate participants with different skill levels. See <i>Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual</i> , No. 32007.		
7	A written policy is in place to protect a natural site from environmental degradation. Participants are knowledgeable in Leave No Trace as it applies to climbing/rappelling sites.		
<b>II. Program Administration</b>			
M8	A BSA-trained climbing director, or a BSA-trained instructor who is at least 21 years of age (lead instructor), must supervise the climbing/rappelling		

## 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

(Conducted once a calendar year)

Standard	Yes	No	Comments
<p>site. A climbing director need not be present during climbing or rappelling activities, provided that an instructor who is at least 21 years of age (lead instructor) is present at the site. Each BSA climbing director and instructor has evidence of active instruction in climbing/rappelling at least once within the past year. See <i>Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual</i>, No. 32007.</p> <p>Climbing director or lead instructor: _____</p> <p>Date of certificate of training: _____ Age: _____</p> <p>Beginning in 2006, each BSA local council that operates a climbing program must have a currently trained climbing director to give overall supervision to the council's climbing program.</p>			
<p><b>M9</b> A minimum of two climbing directors or instructors must supervise any climbing/rappelling activity and be present during construction, operation, and dismantling of portable structures. Each climbing director or instructor supervises no more than six participants, including adult leaders, in climbing or rappelling. The instructors must never leave participants unattended.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M10</b> Natural sites for climbing/rappelling on BSA property must be inspected twice a year by a climbing director.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M11</b> Close calls (incidents that do not result in injury, but which reveal a potential safety problem), accidents, or injuries that occur during climbing/rappelling activities must be documented by the staff and periodically reviewed by the climbing director, program director, camp director, climbing committee, and council health and safety and/or risk management committee.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M12</b> A site-specific written maintenance checklist is used for all biannual (twice a year) inspections of facilities and equipment. A copy of this checklist should be kept with the climbing/rappelling records, the ranger's records, and the council's records.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>13 When possible, the program is made available to young people with disabilities. These participants are accompanied by adult leaders who are sensitive to the needs of youths with disabilities and familiar with the conditions and ability of the particular individuals. There is an appropriate ratio of instructors to participants with disabilities. See the appendix of <i>Topping Out: A BSA Climbing/Rappelling Manual</i>, No. 32007.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>14 An opportunity is provided for adult leaders to receive training in Climb On Safely.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M15</b> Other organizations or groups are permitted to use the camp climbing/rappelling site or facility only with a hold-harmless agreement, facility use agreement, and certificate of liability insurance in the amount of \$1 million. When the council operates the program, camp climbing equipment or approved personal equipment must be used. When an outside organization operates the program, it must provide its own equipment and instructors.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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Standard	Yes	No	Comments
<b>III. Staff Qualifications and Training</b>			
<p><b>M16</b> The climbing director must be at least 21 years of age, must be a currently registered member of the Boy Scouts of America, and must have successfully completed the Climbing section of BSA National Camping School within the last five camping seasons. Evidence of continuing, active instruction in climbing/rappelling at least once in the past year is available to the inspector. A Project COPE director may supervise a climbing tower.</p> <p>Director: _____</p> <p>Date of certificate of training: _____ Age: _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M17</b> Climbing instructors are at least 18 years of age, are currently registered members of the Boy Scouts of America, and hold a current certificate (within two years) of training as a BSA climbing instructor. A written instructor training plan, approved by the climbing director, has been developed.</p> <p>Instructor: _____</p> <p>Date of certificate of training: _____ Age: _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M18</b> All climbing instructors-in-training (IITs) must be at least 16 years of age, be currently registered members of the BSA, and have received training in climbing, rappelling, belaying, and spotting by a climbing director or instructor. When IITs assist participants, they must have been trained and be supervised by a climbing director or instructor at the site where they are being used. A climbing instructor may also train and supervise climbing IITs.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p><b>M19</b> At least one climbing staff member or one or more persons at the climbing/rappelling site must be currently trained in American Red Cross Standard First Aid (a 6½-hour course that includes CPR), or Level I National Safety Council First Aid, or the equivalent from another nationally or regionally recognized organization, and must be physically present in the immediate area whenever climbing or rappelling is done.</p> <p>In addition, if climbing/rappelling is done outside of resident camp, Wilderness First Aid Basic (a 16-hour course) or The American Red Cross Emergency Response (a 43½-hour course) is recommended.</p> <p>CPR-trained staff member: _____</p> <p>Date of training: _____</p> <p>First aid-trained staff member: _____</p> <p>Date of training: _____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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Standard	Yes	No	Comments
<b>IV. ANCHORS</b>			
M20	All anchors must be fail-proof or backed up and the load distributed.		
M21	Bolts must be a minimum of 3/8-inch steel and suitable for climbing. UIAA-approved (International Union of Alpinists Association) or CE-approved (Community European Norm) hangers must be installed. Installation of climbing bolts on BSA property must have council approval. The length of bolts is appropriate for the type of rock; 2 1/2 inches is the minimum. Pitons are never used in BSA climbing.		
M22	Well-rooted, healthy trees or other living anchors may be used as anchor points in an anchor system. Trees must be at least 6 inches in diameter at the point of attachment. If used, a living anchor must be protected from damage.		
M23	Anchor systems must have a strength of at least 22.2 kiloNewtons (5,000 pounds). (Webbing may be doubled to meet this standard.) Each belay anchor is placed to provide the most effective protection for both the climber and the belayer. The belayer's position allows for no slack between the belayer and the anchor point and is kept in direct line with a potential fall.		
M24	A written record is available indicating that anchor bolts and hangers on council property have been installed by a qualified individual who has training and/or experience in installing climbing bolts, and have been checked at least twice annually by the climbing director.		
<b>V. PROGRAM EQUIPMENT</b>			
M25	<p>A UIAA- or CE-approved climbing helmet or a helmet that meets ASTM standards must be worn during all BSA climbing/rappelling activities where the participants' feet are more than their shoulder height above ground level. Each individual in the safety zone of a climbing or rappelling site also must also wear an approved rock-climbing helmet, and each rappeller must wear appropriate gloves.</p> <p>All climbing helmets must be retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations or no more than seven years from the date of purchase, or sooner if conditions warrant it.</p>		
M26	All ropes used for climbing must be kernmantle and must be UIAA- or CE-approved. All static ropes used for rappelling must have a tensile strength (breaking strength) rating of at least 22.2 kiloNewtons (5,000 pounds) when new. A diameter of 5/16 inch or 11 millimeters is recommended for static rappelling ropes; every climbing rope must have a minimum diameter of 10.5 millimeters. All ropes and nylon webbing must be new when procured. Webbing must be		

## 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

(Conducted once a calendar year)

Standard	Yes	No	Comments
designed for climbing and must have a minimum breaking strength of 15.6 kiloNewtons (3,500 pounds) when new.			
<b>M27</b> A written log of the history of each rope used in the program must be kept, indicating: (1) the date the rope was purchased, (2) the number and type of participant uses and any unusual impacts, and (3) any environmental or severe stresses that were placed on the rope. Each rope must be uniquely marked and permanently identified. All webbing must be marked with the date of purchase. All climbing ropes and webbing must be retired after the fourth year, regardless of use. If a rope or webbing shows signs of excessive wear or abuse, it must be retired immediately. It is recommended that the same rope always be used for the same application to learn what its life span is.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>M28</b> All items of specialized equipment (carabiners, helmets, belay and rappel devices, webbing, rope, etc.) needed for conducting a safe program are available to the participants. Personal climbing/rappelling helmets, harnesses, and shoes must meet climbing equipment standards and be inspected and approved by the on-site director or lead instructor before use. Personal climbing/rappelling ropes, hardware, and webbing are not allowed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>M29</b> A properly sized commercial climbing harness or a tied harness made from at least 1-inch-wide webbing is required on all belayed activities. In addition, a chest harness must be used for participants whose body shape could allow them to slip out of a seat harness if inverted. Harnesses must be carefully inspected before each use and retired when damaged or excessively worn.  All climbing harnesses must be retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations or no more than seven years from the date of purchase, or sooner if conditions warrant it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>M30</b> An appropriate, commercially produced belay device attached with a locking carabiner is used for belaying. An appropriate, commercially made rappel device attached with a locking carabiner is used for rappelling. Brake bars on carabiners are prohibited. If rappel or brake racks are used, the climbing director and instructors must have the knowledge and experience to use them in a safe manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>M31</b> Equipment must be kept in locked, protective storage when not being used, away from exposure to heat, sunlight, chemicals, or destruction or contamination by animals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>M32</b> Climbing directors and instructors regularly inspect climbing/rappelling equipment and are taught how to inspect equipment for defects that render equipment unsafe for usage. Retired equipment is disposed of in such a way that it cannot be retrieved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

(Conducted once a calendar year)

Standard	Yes	No	Comments
M33 Written equipment records are kept that include a complete and current inventory; a record of date of purchase, issue and check-in; and a record of maintenance of facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>VI. PARTICIPANT PREREQUISITES</b>			
M34 Climbing/rappelling equipment and activities must be age appropriate and geared to the skill level of the participants. Age-appropriate equipment and instruction is provided. See the <i>Climb On Safely Training Outline</i> , No. 20-101A, or <i>Age-Appropriate Guidelines</i> , No. 18-260.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M35 Personal objects that could lead to injuries are removed before participants or staff members engage in climbing/rappelling activities. Long hair must be tied up and/or tucked.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M36 No one is ever coerced or pressured into attempting any activity. A participant may be encouraged to take the next small step, but the final choice of participation and performance is left entirely up to the individual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M37 Several warm-up activities are conducted at the beginning of each program session.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M38 A site and safety orientation is conducted for participants by an instructor or director before the climbing/rappelling activity. A written checklist is used to ensure that all points are covered during the orientation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M39 The technique of safe spotting is explained, demonstrated, and practiced before participants are permitted to engage in any activity requiring that skill.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M40 The techniques of proper belaying and use of signals and equipment are explained, demonstrated, and practiced under safe conditions before participants are permitted to engage in climbing or rappelling. Participants are thoroughly trained in the proper use of specialized equipment such as a commercial or tied-seat harness, carabiners, belay and rappel devices, and climbing ropes before using them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>VII. PROGRAM SAFETY PROCEDURES</b>			
M41 The on-site climbing director or lead instructor determines if the safety of a participant might be compromised by conditions, staffing, weather, or any other factor, and is empowered to open or close the climbing program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M42 Written, site-specific rules and safety procedures are known and used by the climbing staff. See the <i>BSA Topping Out</i> , No. 32007.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M43 All climbing participants are top-roped. All rappelling participants are belayed. All participants rappelling on a single rope are belayed with an independent line.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards

(Conducted once a calendar year)

Standard	Yes	No	Comments
M44	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M45	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M46	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M47	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M48	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>VIII. FIRST-AID AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES</b>			
M49	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M51	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
M52	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## 2005 NATIONAL STANDARD RATING SCORESHEET FOR COUNCIL-OPERATED CLIMBING/RAPPELLING

This scoresheet is for use in conjunction with the 2005 Climbing/Rappelling National Standards to record the results of the course visitation. Send the results to the appropriate regional service center within five days of completing the on-site inspection.

This inspection was conducted for a program with  a climbing wall  a climbing tower  a portable facility  a natural site

Camp name \_\_\_\_\_ Region \_\_\_\_\_ Area \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Council name \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_

Regional visitation team led by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name Signature

Scout executive

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name Signature

**MANDATORY STANDARDS.** Failure to comply with any of these standards is cause to close the program or a particular part of the program. Circle the items that do not comply.

- |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |  |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 |  |
| 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |  |

**QUALITY STANDARDS.** Circle items that do not comply. Council climbing/rappelling programs must meet at least three of these four quality standards.

- 6    7    13    14

1. Does the climbing/rappelling program comply with all mandatory standards? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. How many quality standards does the program comply with? Enter number. \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONALLY ACCREDITED** program rating may be awarded if the answer to the mandatory standards is yes and the answer to the quality standards is three or more.

This program (does/does not) qualify as a nationally accredited climbing/rappelling program for the 2005 season.

This program is closed until significant deficiencies are corrected.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Visitation team chair Area director or regional representative

### Climbing/Rappelling Activities Closed

Name of Activity	Reason for Closure	Corrective Action Needed

**Have a photocopy of this form available for the resident camp inspection team.**



**BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA**

1325 West Walnut Hill Lane

P.O. Box 152079

Irving, Texas 75015-2079

<http://www.scouting.org>

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