

Catholic Mutual. . ."CARES"

CLIMBING WALLS

Today's schools are always looking for new and exciting ways to promote physical activity for their students. One such activity that is gaining popularity is the use of climbing walls. There are numerous vendors that offer permanent climbing walls in various sizes as well as portable climbing walls.

Horizontal walls are the most popular in the elementary schools. These walls usually extend approximately 40' across and stand about 8' in height. These walls provide students with the challenge of traversing along the wall to help increase their dexterity and confidence.

Vertical climbing walls are found more in junior high or high schools. While the number of injury-related claims on these walls is low, the potential for a very serious claim exists. Therefore, Catholic Mutual Group does not recommend utilizing these types of walls due to the serious nature of injury that could occur. Vertical climbing walls run as high as 30' to 40' and require the use of fall protection equipment such as a belay, as well as other climbing hardware.

Regardless of the type of climbing wall chosen, the following safety requirements must be in place and faithfully adhered to at all times to minimize the risk of injury to any participant.

Horizontal Climbing Walls

1. Qualified Instructors – A qualified instructor for climbing must supervise all climbing activities. An additional adult must be present during climbing activities to assist with supervision.
2. The qualified instructor must check the site prior to each use to ensure all handholds/ footholds are secure and to evaluate any other possible hazards that may exist.
3. Climbers must wear appropriate safety equipment such as helmets, knee/shin guards, and elbow guards. This equipment must be furnished by the school. Equipment must be available that is the appropriate size for the participants. Helmets must be labeled as approved by ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials).
4. While most climbing walls come with a protective padding for the floor beneath the wall, an additional cushioning mat must be in place while the equipment is in use. This mat must extend the width of the wall and a minimum 6' out from the wall.
5. Only active climbers should be allowed on the wall or in the area surrounding the wall. A minimum 10' around the wall should be maintained by individuals waiting to climb or those observing the climbers.
6. Climbers must be spaced a minimum 6' apart while climbing across the wall.
7. The cover for the wall must be in place and padlocked anytime the wall is not in use.

Vertical Climbing Walls

1. Qualified Instructors – A qualified instructor for climbing/rappelling must supervise all climbing/rappelling activities. The instructor must have completed a minimum of 10 hours of climbing/rappelling instruction from a nationally or regionally recognized organization. One qualified instructor must be present as well as another individual to assist the instructor with supervision. Only a qualified instructor is allowed to hold belay lines.
2. Participants must have a Parental Permission/Indemnification Agreement signed prior to using the climbing wall. (See Appendix A). This agreement must be signed by the parents each time the wall is used by the participant.
3. No one under 10 years of age should be allowed on a vertical climbing wall over 10' in height.
4. The qualified climbing instructor must check the site in advance to evaluate possible hazards and determine if the wall is suitable for the intended participants.
5. The instructor should verify that the proper equipment is available for the size and ability level of the participants. Helmets, rope and climbing hardware must be labeled as approved by ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials). All equipment must be new or furnished by the school.
6. An additional cushioning mat must be in place at the bottom of the wall in addition to the current mat when the wall is in use. This additional mat should be a minimum 2' thick and extend the width of the wall and a minimum 8' out from the wall.
7. Only one climber should be allowed on the wall at a time. A minimum 20' clearance should be maintained around the wall for individuals waiting to climb or those observing the climbers.
8. Equipment must be inspected prior to each session as well as after the session. Irregularities to look for include frays, breaks or mantel-ruptures in ropes; clear rope-wear on hardware such as grooves in a figure 8; cuts or frays in webbing; gate or locking-barrel irregularities in carabiners; cracks in helmets; torn palms in rappel gloves. A more comprehensive list is attached (Appendix B). Also, the Daily Use Checklist (Appendix C) must be completed, dated and signed prior to each days use.
9. Records must be kept on ropes. Each rope should be color coded and listed on its own "Rope Use Log" (Appendix D), noting the date used, hours in use, number of participants, and any unusual stresses on the rope such as a fall. Ropes and webbing should be retired after four years of use or three falls or 250 hours of use, whichever comes first.
10. All equipment should be stored in metal containers away from sunlight.
11. A first aid kit and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) should be readily available.
12. The cover for the wall must be in place and padlocked anytime the wall is not in use. Any students/children in the gym must be supervised at all times whether during school hours or before/after school hours to ensure the wall is not used inappropriately.

Portable Climbing Walls

Many parishes/schools elect to rent a portable climbing wall for special events. If this option is chosen by your location, the following list of safety recommendations must be followed.

1. Any vendor providing a climbing wall should sign the attached Vendor Hold Harmless/Indemnity Agreement (Appendix E). This agreement requires a certificate of insurance documenting liability insurance in the amount of two million dollars per occurrence. The certificate must name your parish/school and the (Arch) Diocese as an *additional insured*. **YOUR LIABILITY COVERAGE THROUGH CATHOLIC MUTUAL WOULD NOT EXTEND TO NON-OWNED CLIMBING WALLS SO IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT APPROPRIATE INSURANCE IS PROVIDED BY THE VENDOR.**
2. All climbers are to be supervised and assisted by the vendor's staff only. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
3. All climbers are to wear helmets. Climbers must be properly harnessed and tethered. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
4. Make sure the area used is free of obstacles on both the ground and overhead. It is best to rope off the area to keep people and objects out.
5. Make sure there is an adequate "fall zone" under the climbing wall with adequate cushioning material to reduce injury potential from a fall.
6. A first aid kit and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) should be readily available.
7. The parish/school should ensure that vendor keeps adequate records indicating how long the equipment has been in service and if there were any serious falls on the equipment.

If you have further questions regarding climbing walls, please contact the Risk Management Department.

(Rev. 5/08)

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM AND LIABILITY WAIVER

Child's name: _____
Birth date: _____ Sex: _____
Parent/Guardian's name: _____
Home address: _____
Home phone: _____ Business phone: _____

I, _____ grant permission for my child, _____ to
Parent or guardian's name Child's name
participate in climbing wall activities (ACTIVITY). This event will take place under the
guidance and direction of a qualified instructor from _____
Name of parish/school
on the following date(s) _____.

As parent and/or legal guardian, I remain legally responsible for any personal actions taken by the above named minor ("participant").

I would like my CHILD/WARD to participate in the above named ACTIVITY. As parent or legal guardian, I agree to defend and fully indemnify the above named PARISH/SCHOOL against any claim which results from the intentional or negligent actions taken of my CHILD/WARD during the above named ACTIVITY.

I further agree to fully indemnify and hold harmless the PARISH/SCHOOL against any claim or cause of action whatsoever brought by my CHILD/WARD or his/her parent/legal guardian against the PARISH/SCHOOL which arose out of the above-identified ACTIVITY, regardless of whether such claim results from the negligence of the PARISH/SCHOOL, its employees or volunteers or the negligence of individuals or companies not a party to this agreement.

I certify that I have an understanding of this agreement and the risks and hazards associated with the ACTIVITY described above that my CHILD/WARD will be participating in. I further understand that I had the opportunity to fully discuss this agreement with a representative of the PARISH/SCHOOL to clarify any concerns or questions about the activity or this agreement that I may have had.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

EQUIPMENT SAFETY GUIDELINES

All equipment used at the climbing wall must be inspected prior to daily use (i.e. hands-on examination of ropes, harnesses, hardware and connections). Do not use questionable defective equipment. If you find a defect, replace it immediately. Tag the equipment and take it out of use. If it is a maintenance problem, fill out and forward the **Climbing Wall Maintenance Request Form (Appendix B-1)**. The qualified instructor has the final “say” on the use, replacement and repair of any equipment or the wall itself.

<p><i>Carabiners and Figure-8's</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive Wear • Cracks • Rust • Gates not closing/locking properly 	<p><i>Hardware</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken, loose or rusted bolts, nuts, rings • Cracked climbing holds • Bolts, nut or nails protruding from the wall • Hinges loose on doors
<p><i>Ropes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kern sticking through mantle • Soft spot (broken kern) in rope • Frays, cuts, abrasions • Chemical or burn damage 	<p><i>The Grounds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocks • Any debris, garbage or dangerous objects • Any individuals in “fall zone”
<p><i>Harnesses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intact buckles, connectors • Cuts, worn spots and abrasions • Ripped seams and sewing • Hardening • Chemical damage 	<p><i>Webbing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frayed spots • Cuts, worn spots and abrasions • Discoloring, fading • Hardening • Chemical damage
<p><i>Helmets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cracks or breaks in the surface • Secure chin straps and connectors • Sanitation (the sniff test) 	<p><i>Wood</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of decay or rotting • Splintering • Structural cracks, splits

A note about ropes and webbing: Ropes and webbing (harnesses, tubular webbing) are petro-chemical products. As such, they are especially sensitive to petro-chemical fumes and exposure to light. In addition, dirt ground into the nylon of ropes or any webbing product can significantly reduce the effective life of these pieces of climbing equipment. Finally, storing wet ropes and webbing will cause mildew and rot. Air dry all soft climbing gear before you store it.

Therefore, you must take the following steps with all ropes and webbed gear:

- Never store ropes or webbed gear in any space with gasoline, kerosene, or any other petro-chemical product.
- Keep ropes clean and free of dirt. Keep participants away from the ropes so that the climbers and rappellers will not step on gear and grind dirt into the fibers.
- Log time that the ropes have been in the sunlight as full time.
- Do not leave ropes rigged when they are not being used. Take ropes down immediately after each session.
- If ropes and “soft” gear have gotten damp or wet, air dry them before storing them.

- At least once a season, wash the ropes and webbing with Woolite or similar mild detergent. Air dry the soft gear in the shade or inside if adequate ventilation can also allow it to be air dried. Do not use a machine dryer for ropes and soft gear.

A note about hardware: The metal alloys in carabiners, figure-8's, rapid-links, eyelets and other "hardware" are subject to fracture and breakage. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that before a participant receives a piece of gear, a staff member has checked each piece of hardware.

The necessary procedure is simple and quick. As you set gear out before participants arrive, do a visual and a hand check of each carabiner and figure-8.

- Does the gate of each carabiner close cleanly?
- Does the barrel-lock on each gate screw shut and open smoothly?
- Are there any deep grooves of wear in any figure-8s or carabiners?
- Are the buckles on the harnesses uncracked?
- Are the nylon connectors on the harnesses and the helmet straps intact and working?

CLIMBING WALL MAINTENANCE REQUEST

Initiated by: _____ Date: _____

A. Specific concern, idea, problem, etc.

B. Specific location of the concern, idea, problem, etc.

C. Description/diagram

D. Suggestions to remedy/correct

FOR MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____

Action taken: _____

Date action completed: _____

Date: _____ Inspected By: _____

Daily Use Checklist

Paperwork

_____ Medical forms examined and in order for all participants. Signed by parent or guardian. Potential problems discussed by staff members.

Emergency Resources/Procedures

- _____ First aid kit complete and at the site.
- _____ Automatic External Defibrillator recommended.
- _____ Communications system operating.
- _____ At least one staff member is currently CPR and First Aid certified.

Equipment Inspections

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| _____ Helmets | _____ Belay anchors | _____ Carabiners |
| _____ Figure-8s | _____ Pulleys | _____ Harnesses |
| _____ Ropes | _____ Gloves | _____ Webbing |

Participant Safety and Orientation

- _____ Rules of the climbing wall and its operation are explained to all participants.
- _____ Jewelry, scarves, watches, sharp objects in packets, large belt buckles, dangling earrings, necklaces, etc. are removed before participating.
- _____ Long hair and loose clothing is securely tied away from harnesses and gear.
- _____ When participants perform climbing belays, adequate instruction is given in advance and is supervised by a staff member.
- _____ Long pants and full shoes (not flip-flops or sandals) are worn by all participants.
- _____ Only staff members belay rappels.

Tower and Grounds

- _____ General condition of all walls, doors, stairs, guard/safety railings are acceptable.
- _____ Grounds are free of litter and hazards.

Equipment Check-In and Security

- _____ All equipment in use by participants has been supplied by parish/school and is returned to secure storage.
- _____ The Rope Use Log and Daily Use Form have been completed.

VENDOR HOLD HARMLESS/INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

PARISH: _____

PARISH is understood to include the Arch/Diocese of _____

VENDOR: _____

TYPE OF VENDOR: _____

DATES OF USE: _____

The above named VENDOR agrees to defend, protect, indemnify, and hold harmless the above named PARISH against and from all claims arising from the negligence or fault of the above named VENDOR or any of its agents, family members, officers, volunteers, helpers, partners, organizational members, or associates in connection with the operations of the above named VENDOR at the above named PARISH.

VENDOR agrees to provide a certificate of insurance to the PARISH, which provides evidence of general liability coverage of not less than two million dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence. VENDOR also agrees to have the PARISH named as an “**Additional Insured**” on its general liability policy for the DATES OF PARISH FESTIVAL in relationship to the VENDOR’S activities. It is agreed that VENDOR also agrees to ensure that its liability insurance policy will be primary in the event of a covered claim or cause of action against PARISH.

If and only if VENDOR fails to comply with the above (second) paragraph, then VENDOR agrees to protect, defend, hold harmless, and fully indemnify the above named PARISH for any claim or cause of action whatsoever which takes place during the above identified DATE(S) OF USE that is brought against the PARISH by the above named VENDOR or its employees, agents, guests, invitees, customers, partners, family members, organizational members, and associates, even if such claim arises from the alleged negligence of the PARISH, its employees or agents or the negligence of any other individual or organization not a party to this agreement. If any paragraph or sentence of this agreement is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance thereof, shall continue in full legal force and effect.

SIGNED BY: _____

(Must be an official agent of VENDOR)

NAME AND TITLE: _____

DATE: _____