



Climbing Walls Fact Sheet

While climbing walls and other extreme sports are popular with children, there are some safety drawbacks that present themselves when closely examined. Before engaging in such an extreme sport, ensure that participants are sufficiently trained and that a certified climbing wall supervisor is on hand during any actual climb. These risk management guidelines have been developed based on lessons learned from climbing wall accidents as well as from manufacturer's guidelines and non-profit climbing wall consensus industry standards.

Before Construction:

- Check with your insurance company to ensure that an extreme activity is covered under your liability policy.
- Require a certificate of insurance with an additional insured endorsement (COI/AIE) from the company doing the actual wall installation. Minimum liability insurance coverage should include:
 1. General liability (GL) coverage – occurrence basis
 2. A minimum of \$5.0 million in limits from an A rated insurance carrier
 3. A COI/AIE which should have “completed operations” coverage or equal language

Do not accept claims-made coverage or “ongoing operations” wording in the COI/AIE. Consult with your insurance broker for specific COI/AIE GL endorsement wording and other risk transfer guidance.

- Your installer must be certified by the wall manufacturer and qualified for this type of work. (Check references and credentials.)
- One resource for planning, design, construction, and finishing of indoor climbing walls:
http://www.indoorclimbing.com/climbing_walls.html

Once Construction is complete:

- Be sure that the climbing wall rules, hours of operation, and required procedures are discussed with staff and supervisors and that they are clearly posted.
- Block all access to the wall when it is not in use.

Operation Guidelines:

- Climbing wall facilities should strictly follow the best practices listed in: *Industry Practices: A Sourcebook for the Operation of Manufactured Climbing Walls, Third Edition*, available from www.climbingwallassociation.org
- No one under that age of 12 should be allowed to use the wall.
- The landing zone below the wall should have adequate engineered crash padding and floor covering designed for that purpose to ensure safety in the event that someone should fall. An engineered Climbing Wall Flooring System should be installed that at meets this minimum criteria:
 1. Is at least 5.75 inches thick, consisting of a three layer, foam system or better.
 2. The first layer of foam should be approximately 4 inches thick and made up of open cell foam engineered to provide impact absorption.



3. The next layers should be combined to 1 3/4 inches of closed cell foam laminated to a high traffic commercial grade carpet that can capture climbing chalk dust to help keep your air and other flooring clean.
4. **Do not** use gravel, wood chips, chopped rubber or wrestling mats as they are not engineered for climbing wall use.

- All participants should sign hold harmless and permission forms (minors will also need a parent or guardian's signature).
- Participants should be trained prior to usage and sign a form stating they understand the elements of the training.
- Spotters (be layers) should be trained as to their function of the operation and sign a form which is kept on file to document the training.
- First aid kits should be easily accessible.
- Any accidents or close calls should be investigated for root cause and documented with a written report provided to the city business officer.

Climbing Wall Supervision Guidelines:

- Climbing wall supervisors should be trained and certified through a third party certification course that is equal to the Climbing Wall Association's climbing instructor training course www.climbingwallassociation.org (CWA)
- Copies of the climbing wall supervisor's certification should be kept on file.
- Certified climbing wall supervisors should also be present whenever the wall is in use. Training should be at least one day and should at least cover the following elements:

- Detailed wall administration instructions
- Wall maintenance instructions
- Route setting training
- Emergency procedures
- How to set up forms, waivers, and programming for participant records
- Customer orientation
- Climber supervision
- Top-rope basic skills
- Top-rope belay instruction
- Top-rope belay checks
- Belay escape
- Auto belay use and maintenance
- Equipment safety checks and maintenance
- Route setting management
- Climbing Wall Association industry practices
- Bouldering operations

- Not required but recommended additional climbing wall supervisor training
 - Lead climbing assessment and supervision (recommended)
 - Lead climbing instruction (recommended)
 - Staff recruitment, selection, and training (recommended)



Inspection and Maintenance

- A list of all the equipment used with a climbing wall should be kept on file.
- All equipment should be inspected and documented daily for wear and proper operation according to the manufacturer's recommendation.
- Follow the manufacturers' recommendations for required structural integrity inspections of the climbing wall by certified third party inspectors.



- Completed wall inspection forms should be reviewed by the climbing supervisor
- Completed inspection forms and third party inspection reports must be kept on file for two years.
- Any equipment in poor condition should be repaired or replaced immediately.
- The wall and all holds should be inspected and documented on a regular basis.
- Should any portion of the wall warrant repairs, the wall in its entirety should be closed down and access strictly restricted until repairs have been made.

Although these walls can be safe, they can also become a hazard when not used with appropriate safety measures, supervision and maintenance.

This Alliant Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

For more Information on this topic, please contact Alliant Risk Control Consulting at (949) 260-5042 or riskcontrol@alliant.com

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