

Aquatics Play Structures Operational Practices and Procedures Guidance Climbing Devices

The Operational Practices and Procedures Guidance should be applied in conjunction with the BSA's Aquatics Play Structure Policy that can be found in the Aquatics Safety section of the Guide to Safe Scouting..

1) Description

Climbing Devices would include Icebergs, Climbing Walls and other devices designed to climb to some height



2) Typical risks of the Activity

- a) Injuries from falls from the device hitting other participants or structures
- b) Injuries from falls from the device landing on head, neck or back
- c) Electrical shock if electrical air pumps are used for inflation
- d) Injury or drowning from unauthorized or poorly supervised use

3) Safety considerations in placing the Iceberg

- a) Water Depth – because of the risk of falling the minimum depth must be as recommended by the manufacturer or seven feet.
- b) Distance from other objects – a “safe fall zone” must exist around the outside dimensions of the Climbing Device as recommended by the manufacturer or ten feet.
- c) Anchor Lines – because of the risk of falling, anchor lines must be vertical or angled underneath the Climbing Device so they do not pose hazards for participants falling from the device.

4) Safety Check Items

Prior to each activity session, check at least the following and discontinue use if necessary until repairs are made:

- a) Inflation/leaks
- b) Integrity of handholds
- c) Anchor fastenings

5) Safety considerations in conducting the Activity

- a) Participants – participants must be Swimmers and lifejackets must be worn. Those lifejackets designed and reinforced for PWC, water skiing, or other impact activities are recommended.
- b) Explanations -- Rules and procedures are explained to participants prior to the activity.
- c) Buddy System – the buddy system must be used and instructions for the buddies as to where they should be while their buddy is on the Climbing Device should be given.
- d) Participant Flow -- spacing and timing of participants must be controlled so that no participants are in the “safe fall zone” when another participant is on the Climbing Device.
- e) Participant Recovery – once a participant comes off the Climbing Device they must immediately swim to a designated recovery point outside the “safe fall zone”
- f) Lifeguard Positioning – Lifeguards must be able to see all participants in the water at all times. One Lifeguard must be placed in a spot with an unobstructed view of the Climbing Device’s landing area (maybe on a rescue board, sit-on-top kayak or Stand-up Paddleboard). This Lifeguard must ensure that each participant coming off the Climbing Device resurfaces and swims outside the “safe fall zone” to the designated recovery point.

6) Emergency Action Plan Considerations

- a) Adequate communication to stop and direct the flow of participants during an emergency
- b) Spinal injury management with the subject wearing a lifejacket
- c) Cutting electrical power during inflation if electrical pumps are used

7) Prohibited Practices

- a) No participant should climb below or above another participant.
- b) Swimming in the “safe fall zone” when a participant is on the Climbing Device
- c) Flips or dives from the Climbing Device
- d) Swimming beneath the Climbing Device.
- e) Exceptions to the rules for staff-only use