

Climbing Wall

Safety Operating Procedure (SOP)



1. Purpose

This SOP outlines the safe planning and delivery of the Climbing Wall activity to ensure risks are effectively managed and all participants are supported.

2. Scope

Applies to all AOEC staff, instructors, supervising adults, and participants involved in the Climbing Wall activity.

3. Description of Activity

The Climbing Wall is an instructor-led activity designed to develop confidence, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and climbing skills within a controlled indoor environment.

Sessions are typically delivered over a 1½-hour period, although session length may be adjusted to suit the needs of the group.

Participants climb artificial climbing walls while using an instructor-managed top-rope belay system. Climbers work in teams under the direct supervision of AOEC instructors and supervising adults.

The activity involves climbing at height and therefore carries inherent risks. These risks are actively managed through qualified instructors, approved equipment, structured safety systems, regular equipment inspections, and continuous supervision.

The activity is delivered in accordance with the Activity Safety Guideline for Indoor Climbing and Climbing on Artificial Structures (March 2016 V2) and AOEC risk management procedures.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

AOEC Instructors - Lead and manage the activity safely - Conduct pre-session safety checks and equipment inspections - Deliver safety briefings and climbing instruction.- Supervise all climbing activities and monitor participant safety - Coordinate emergency response if required.

Supervising Adults (Teachers/Parents) - Retain duty of care for students at all times - Actively supervise assigned climbing teams - Assist with harness fitting and safety checks - Follow all instructor directions and safety procedures - Monitor student behaviour and maintain discipline where required - Assist with risk management and emergency response if required

Participants - Follow all instructions - Wear required clothing and safety equipment - Disclose relevant medical or behavioural conditions - Behave responsibly and not place themselves or others at risk.

5. Instructor Requirements

- Minimum of one trained AOEC instructor per session (maximum 15 participants).
- Groups larger than 15 participants require a minimum of two instructors.
- New instructors complete competency training consisting of: A minimum of five sessions observing and assisting a competent instructor. A minimum of five supervised instructional sessions demonstrating competence.
- Returning & Seasonal Instructors are updated with new safety practices and procedures
- Risk Management Workshops are held on a regular basis for all instructors.
- Instructors must be familiar with:
 - Climbing wall operating procedures.
 - Equipment inspection requirements.
 - Emergency procedures
 - Risk management systems (RAMS)

Schools and groups may not provide their own climbing instructors.

6. Ratios

- Minimum instructor ratio: 1 instructor per 15 participants. Larger groups require 2 instructors.
 - Supervising adult ratio: Minimum of one supervising adult per climbing team of three participants.
 - Ratios may be increased depending on participant age, confidence, ability, or additional support requirements.
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7. Pre-Activity Requirements

7.1 Risk Disclosure & Medical Information

- All participants and their caregivers must have completed risk disclosure forms prior to activity, which includes the acceptance of Risks of this activity disclosed by AOEC.
- Medical conditions, injuries, behavioural needs and relevant fitness considerations must be disclosed prior to the activity.
- A responsible adult must be assigned for participants requiring medication

7.2 Equipment Checks

Instructors must inspect all climbing equipment before each session: - First aid kit - Harnesses - Climbing Rope - Carabiners - Belay devices (grigri) - Anchors

Equipment inspections and maintenance records must be maintained in accordance with current industry guidelines. Any damaged equipment must be immediately removed from service, tagged, and reported.

Privately owned equipment may only be used if approved by AOEC Management.

7.3 Clothing Requirements & Checks

Participants must: Wear long shorts, long trousers, tights or track pants - Remove jewellery where appropriate - Tie long hair back - Wear correctly fitted harnesses - Climb barefoot where practical - Participants must bring any required personal medication.

7.4 Other Requirements

- Participants must complete the instructor safety briefing before climbing
 - ENSURE participants bring their personal medication with them, and that there is someone present (adult supervisor) who knows how to administer it
 - Participants are encouraged to use the bathroom before the session
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8. Environmental & Weather Assessment (Go/No-Go Criteria)

The activity must not proceed if:

- Safety equipment cannot be used correctly.
- Critical climbing equipment is damaged or unavailable.
- The climbing structure is unsafe.
- Instructor supervision cannot be maintained.

Guiding principle: If in doubt, stop the activity.

Instructors must:

- Complete pre-session equipment inspections.
 - Continuously monitor participant safety.
 - Stop climbing immediately if safety is compromised.
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9. Safety Briefing (Mandatory for all participants)

Must include:

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| • Correct use of climbing equipment. | • Buddy checking procedures. |
| • Harness fitting. | • Safe climbing behaviour. |
| • Belay system operation. | • Climbing commands and communication. |

Supervising adults must be present and engaged during the briefing.

10. Activity Management

During the activity:

- Instructors supervise all climbing and belaying systems.
 - Supervising adults monitor assigned climbing teams.
 - Harnesses and attachment systems are checked before every climb. Carabiners must be locked before climbing begins.
 - Belayers must maintain appropriate rope tension.
 - Climbers descend only under instructor-approved procedures.
 - Participants are regularly monitored for: Fatigue, Anxiety, Confidence and safe climbing technique
 - Activity must be stopped if safety is compromised.
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11. Emergency Response (Summary)

In the event of an incident:

- Instructor takes control of situation.
 - Activity is stopped immediately.
 - First aid is administered by trained person
 - Emergency services contacted via 111 if required
 - AOEC Management notified immediately.
 - Group managed and kept safe by supervising adults
 - Designated person meets emergency services at access point
 - All incidents must be reported to AOEC management and recorded.
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12. Environmental Care (Reinforce this to the students)

- Respect the climbing facility and equipment.
- Use equipment only as instructed.
- Return all equipment and report damaged equipment immediately.
- Leave the Activities Centre clean and tidy.
- Treat the facility and others with respect.

Climbing Wall– Risk Disclosure



Understanding the Risks

We acknowledge that participating in the Climbing Wall Activity involves inherent risks, including but not limited to: - Falls while climbing or descending. - Suspension in a harness - Slips, trips, or falls around the climbing area - Rope burns, pinching, or minor abrasions - Collision with the climbing wall, climbing holds, or equipment - Sprains, strains, fractures, or other injuries resulting from climbing activities - Potential for serious harm, including drowning or death.

We understand these risks cannot be completely eliminated.

Medical & Fitness Declaration

We confirm that: - we have disclosed all relevant medical conditions, injuries, medications, and behavioural considerations - all participants (students & adults) are physically and mentally able to participate in this activity. - We will inform staff of any changes prior to participation.

All participants have consented to receive medical treatment deemed necessary in an emergency.

Participant Responsibilities

We agree to: - Follow all instructions given by AOEC staff - That everyone will wear appropriate clothing and safety equipment at all times - Act responsibly and not endanger themselves or others

We understand that failure to follow instructions may result in removal from the activity.

Acknowledgement of Risk

We confirm that: - We understand the nature of the activity and associated risks - we have had the opportunity to ask questions - We are aware that everyone voluntarily choose to participate.

Liability

We understand that, to the extent permitted by law, AOEC is not liable for injury, loss, or damage resulting from risks inherent to the activity, particularly where instructions and safety requirements are not followed.

Additional Conditions

- We agree to care for any equipment provided and accept responsibility for damage caused by misuse
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Climbing Wall– Risk Disclosure (continued)

Risk Disclosure Documentation

All adult participants, and the parents/caregivers of participating students, have signed the risk disclosure document, confirmed they have read the activity overview and risk management summary, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

In addition, the school is required to complete and return a Risk Disclosure and Emergency Management Summary document. This document includes a full list of all participants (adults and students), relevant medical information, behavioural considerations, and any injuries. It also records confirmation, by way of a checklist against each participant's name, that signed risk disclosures and activity overview documents have been received.

Consent

Name of Teacher in Charge

Signature: _____.

Date: _____

Name of Principal/Member of BOT

Position _____

Signature: _____.

Date: _____

Climbing Wall - Risk Analysis & Management

	Prepared by: Karen Tobich & Emily Underwood Approved by: Board of Trustee - Nisha Duncan		Date: 30/07/2026	Next Review Date: 30/07/2027	
	Risk Rating System: Likelihood (1–5) x Consequence (1–5): 1–5 Low - 6–10 Moderate - 11–15 High				
	What would cause someone to get hurt?	What could happen?	Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm	Risk	Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
People	• Group Leaders/Supervising Adults not familiar with activity instructions, responsibilities & risks	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Physical Wellbeing (cold, hot, wet) • Damage to Equipment • Loss of mana • Boredom/Frustration	12	• Activity Leaders / Adult Supervisors familiarise themselves with Activity Instructions, Responsibilities and RAMS prior to camp/ activity commencement.	4
	• Poor Instructions and understanding of limitations of the group members	• Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment • Loss of mana • Boredom/Frustration	12	• Instructors are well trained • Brief group thoroughly on correct use of equipment and technique, Firmly explain safety rules • No talking/conversations during safety briefing	3
	• Not sufficient supervision or poor supervision	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	12	• Adequate adult supervision, additional support for participants with behaviour issues or disabilities. • Supervising adults are not allowed to leave activity without permission from instructor. • Stop activity until adult ratio is met, contract manager if still unable.	4
	• Poor Group management	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	9	• Groups no bigger than 12, Climbing teams of 3 plus one supervising adult per team. Encourage Group Support. Halt activity in event of any risk(s)	3
	• Poor belaying: technique, belayer not watching climber, not aware of slack rope	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	12	• Keep reminding participants and supervising adult of correct technique and to watch climber and slack in rope. Cover safety measures	4
	• Missed Safety Checks	• Death • Major Injury • Minor Injury	6	• Keep reminding participants and supervising adult of correct technique and to watch for "safety checks". Cover safety measures	3
	• Poor foot and hand hygiene	• Minor Injury	4	• Hand sanitiser provided and used after each session. Make sure feet are clean before climbing, participants are allowed to wear closed toe shoes for any feet conditions.	1
	• Improper use of equipment	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	12	• Use equipment as advised by instructor. Every climbing wall is different	4
	• Not listening & Unruly behaviour	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to Equipment • Loss of process • Frustration/Lack of concentration	12	• Brief group on safe behaviour • Stop activity and sit out any participants that are not following the rules.	4
	• Special Needs not identified	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Frustration • Not enough support	9	• Risk Disclosure forms with Disabilities must be discussed before or on arrival of camp. • Ensure extra adult support is met Inform management if extra staff is needed	3
	• Student/Group Leader/Supervising Adult becomes incapacitated (Injury, heart attack, asthma, etc)	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury	10	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults. Who is the nominated knowledgeable person to deal with known medical/behavioural issues Other Adults in Group must know what to do in an emergency. Follow emergency action plan for medical call out.	8
	• Poor Clothing & Footwear	• Major injury • Minor Injury • Hypothermia/hyperthermia	6	• Before activity check that no short shorts are worn by participants, shorts must at least reach mid thigh, no oversized clothing, long hair must be tied up	2
	• Poor Maintenance System	• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment	12	• Provide quality gear for purpose • Know limitations of equipment • All equipment maintained and checked regularly • Ensure each climb is recorded and logged • Ropes ends changed every 500 climbs and ropes replaced every 2000 climbs or earlier if required • During the briefing identify with group the main risks to equipment and how to avoid damage.	2

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	What would cause someone to get hurt?		What could happen?		Risk Rating	Risk Management Control Measures	Risk Rating
	Hazards/Harm		Risk		Initial	What can be prevented? By Whom?	Post Control
Equipment	• Poor fit of harnesses, Carabiners not locked		• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury • Damage to equipment		6	• Ensure equipment fits each participant • Check each participants harness before starting. • Check carabiners are locked before every climb. • Ensure participants and supervising adults know how to check this.	1
	• No or insufficient Emergency Supplies (rescue equipment & communication device)		• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury		8	• Ensure ladders and Walkie-Talkies are at hand before session start	2
	• Missing/Damaged Equipment		• Death • Major injury • Minor Injury		8	• Make sure all equipment is regularly checked and accounted for. Check the belay device is correctly attach to rope.	2
	• No first aid kit on site		• Major injury • Minor Injury		8	• Ensure First Aid kit is on site	4
Environment	• Weather unsuitable for session, activity centre can become very warm in summer and cold in the winter		• Major injury • Minor Injury • Hyperthermia/hypothermia		6	• Ensure participants are dressed for the weather conditions, open doors and windows to keep cooler in the summer.	3
	• Climbing wall becoming wet and slippery from students coming in from rain		• Minor injury • Major Injury		6	• Keep wet gear at the door, towel off feet and hands if need.	3

Emergency Plan	First Aid	Medical Treatment	Serious Injury
	• Who is the trained and nominated First Aider	• Follow Emergency Action Plan Discussed at Pre Activity Safety Talk and at Safety Stations	• See Emergency Action Plan discussed at Safety Talks and at Safety Stations
	• First Aid Kit - Instructors have this	• Katikati Medical Centre • 07 549 0411 4 Clive Road, Katikati	• Call 111 or activate PLB
	• Know medical conditions/behaviour issues of students & adults and knowledgeable person to deal with it	• Tauranga Hospital, Cameron Road, Tauranga • 07 579 8000	• Nominate someone to meet Emergency Services at Gate
	• Incident & Accident Reporting	• Report to AOEC Management • Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station	• Report to AOEC Management • Incident & Accident Reporting on Safety Log at Kitchen Safety Station