

APPENDIX: 2013 COPE AND CLIMBING STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION:

The BSA COPE and Climbing National Task Force would like to express its gratitude for the dedication and service to Scouting that all of our COPE and climbing people have provided and continue to provide. Without your determined efforts, these programs would not be possible. The members of the task force have received considerable input from all across the country concerning the standards, and we have done our best to put the 2013 standards together with that input in mind.

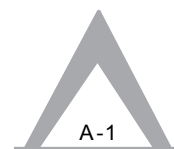
Over the past few years, the climate within which our programs operate has changed. There are a significant number of states that are now regulating challenge courses, zip lines, canopy tours, and other adventure activities, and many more have legislation pending. In some of those states, specific references to compliance with Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) standards are contained in the legislation. Many of the changes to the 2013 BSA COPE and Climbing Standards are intended to bring us closer to compliance with the ACCT standards.

Several years ago, we adopted the ACCT standards for installation and inspection but continued to write our own standards, some of which were duplicated in the ACCT standards. A few years ago, we eliminated many of our duplicated standards and referenced the ACCT standards in such areas as terminations, support structures, and other construction-related standards. Some of our equipment standards were quite prescriptive in nature, whereas the industry standard allowed more flexibility. This edition of the BSA standards eliminates most of those and allows for the good judgment of our qualified people who are delivering our programs to our members. A good example is the rope standard, which specified the minimum size of rope to be used in our programs. The standard on rope/cordage in the current ACCT standard allows more flexibility while providing specific guidance for the entire system rather than looking at only ropes. You will find that we still have a standard concerning rope logs and retirement criteria. ACCT does not specify a specific length of time for retirement of ropes but does require organizations to have an operating policy on retirement, and the task force felt that the 5/10-year standard should be maintained.

Generally, where there is an ACCT standard that is appropriate for our use, we have eliminated our standard item. Where there is an absence of an ACCT standard that is specific for our use, we have retained our standard item.

Although some of you are running climbing programs where ACCT standards do not seem to directly apply (e.g., natural rock), there are equipment and operations standards items that are applicable.

Staff member titles generally use the terminology of the ACCT standards. The competencies contained in the operations standards, which we are adopting, are the basis for revisions to the syllabi for our national training. It is important to note that while we are adopting the ACCT operations standards, we are not mandating ACCT certification for BSA program staff nor is certification



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required in order to comply with ACCT operations standards. The COPE and Climbing National Task Force will continue to monitor changes to the ACCT certification standards as they unfold and will communicate these developments through our BSA communication channels.

The changes to our standards relating to program staffing are significant and will enable councils to take greater ownership of their COPE and climbing programs with the support of the area and regional COPE and climbing volunteers. New positions identified in our 2013 standards are parallel for both COPE and climbing as follows:

- Level I instructor
- Level II instructor
- COPE and climbing program manager
- Training program evaluator

One significant change in program operation is that Level II instructors for either COPE or climbing directly supervise the program site. COPE and climbing program managers provide overall direction for the council program but are not required to be present at the program site during program operation. The PM is a new position in the COPE and climbing organization that is intended to strengthen the program. More specific information regarding that role can be found in the operations, training, and certification chapters of the ACCT standards.

The qualifications for the COPE and climbing chair have been changed to specify the skills and attributes required for that position within the committee. In conjunction with these changes, area and regional COPE and climbing volunteers will provide more support to help the council committees meet their program goals.

The training program evaluators will be responsible for evaluating the quality of all council-level COPE and climbing staff training programs and testing processes. The training program evaluators will not deliver the training. We have many excellent COPE and climbing volunteers who have been delivering quality training for many years. The training program evaluators will work with these volunteers to ensure that training programs and testing and assessment processes work for each training venue.

The BSA COPE and Climbing National Task Force invites your constructive feedback concerning the 2013 standards. Please contact your regional COPE and climbing chair(s), listed at the end of this appendix, for more information.

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APPLIES TO:

These standards are designed to provide for the safety of participants and staff members engaged in COPE and climbing programs operated by the Boy Scouts of America. The COPE and climbing programs support the BSA's purpose of developing character, citizenship, and fitness in young people through participation in educational and developmental activities. Facilities within these programs should be designed and operated to deliver the promise of Scouting by providing experiences for our members that are consistent with our purpose.

A COPE course is defined as any constructed and/or portable challenge elements that are part of a challenge course program. Programs must be supervised by qualified staff as described in these standards. Climbing and rappelling programs include natural rock sites, boulders, and artificial climbing structures. These standards apply to all COPE and climbing activities that are operated by councils and/or their districts at any location and at any time of the year. COPE and climbing programs are reviewed during the annual assessments, which are conducted by a trained COPE and climbing assessment specialist (see Standard CC-8).

These standards provide a framework for councils to operate safe and effective programs. Any program or element that does not meet one or more of these standards must not be operated until compliance is achieved. It may be necessary to close a portion of the program or a particular activity or element as a result of noncompliance, while allowing operation of the rest of the program.

Councils wishing to pursue alternate adventure programming (such as adventure parks, canopy tours, big zips, etc.) need to explore all applicable state and local laws, as well as conformance with BSA and ACCT standards. Current BSA training may not be sufficient to facilitate safe operation of these alternate adventure programs (see Standard CC-29). These programs should serve an objective not being met in current COPE or climbing programs. Written approval of these adventure programs must be secured from Outdoor Programs, S250, at the BSA national office prior to operation. The approval document shall be available for the assessment specialist during the annual program review.

Standards CC-1 through CC-39 apply to both COPE and climbing programs; Standards CR-1 through CR-5 apply to climbing programs only; and Standard CO-1 applies to COPE programs only.

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STANDARDS:

If COPE and/or climbing programs are offered, the program manager provides management of the overall program and resources, proper supervision of activities, and adequate staff training to provide safe and effective programs.

PROGRAM SITES

CC-1: All program facilities shall comply with current ACCT standards for installation and inspection. A copy of the current ACCT standards is available for review.

CC-2: Program sites on council property are located where access is controlled or monitored when the site is not in use. Warning signs are posted at the program sites.

CC-3: Activity sites are free of distractions from other program areas.

CC-4: A written policy is followed to protect the program site from environmental degradation. A well-planned, well-constructed, and well-maintained trail system is used. Leave No Trace principles are applied where they are applicable to COPE and/or climbing activities.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

CC-5: When programs are conducted for groups with special needs, adult leaders familiar with the conditions and abilities of the participants are available to assist.

CC-6: A qualified COPE and/or climbing manager supervises the operations of the COPE and/or climbing programs and is a member of the COPE and climbing committee. This committee supports the program's operation, sets local policies, provides for maintenance and inspection of facilities, and trains program staff. This committee is chaired by a person who is knowledgeable in COPE and/or climbing programs and possesses organizational and leadership skills.

CC-7: A written site-specific maintenance checklist of facilities and equipment is used for the council COPE and Climbing committee inspection.

CC-8: The COPE course, climbing area (natural and/or constructed), bouldering walls, and portable climbing structures are inspected:

- Twice annually by members of the council COPE and Climbing committee

The COPE course and climbing area (natural and/or constructed) are evaluated:

- Once annually by a BSA regional COPE and Climbing assessment team

The COPE course and climbing structures are inspected:

- Every two years by a qualified inspector as defined by ACCT. This will change to an annual inspection in 2014.



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Reports from the above inspections will include documentation of recommendations and actions taken to resolve problems.

CC-9: All incidents, including those that do not result in injury but reveal a potential safety problem, must be documented by staff members and periodically reviewed by the COPE and Climbing committee. These records must be retained according to the council's retention policy. A written action plan is developed with steps to be taken to reduce the potential for recurrence. Records should be available to the regional COPE and Climbing assessment team.

CC-10: Non-BSA organizations or groups are permitted to use the council's COPE and climbing facilities only with a hold harmless agreement, facility-use agreement, and certificate of liability insurance in the amount of \$2 million. When the council operates the climbing program, camp climbing equipment or approved personal equipment must be used. When a non-BSA organization operates the climbing program, it must provide its own equipment and instructors. Non-BSA organizations or groups are permitted to use the COPE course and equipment only while under the direction of council program staff as referenced in the "Staff Qualifications and Training" section of these standards.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

CC-11: All program operations shall comply with current ACCT standards for operation and training. Neither ACCT standards nor BSA standards mandate certification for staff.

CC-12: A written site-specific staff training plan has been approved by the council COPE and Climbing committee and implemented in the COPE and climbing program. These programs must include the core, technical, and facilitation competencies identified in the current ACCT operations standards. Training programs shall be evaluated at least every five years by a training program evaluator who is not affiliated with the training program being evaluated.

CC-13: All COPE and climbing staff have appropriate qualifications and training as shown on the following chart. Documentation of training for all council COPE and climbing program staff is available for the regional assessment team.

A program manager (PM) is responsible for managing the overall program operations. (A trained PM must be in place by 2014.)

Level I and Level II instructors are site/system specific, which means the training qualifies them to operate programs only within their own councils. Training for Level I instructors will be done primarily at the council level. Training for Level II instructors may be done at the council or national level (National Camping School). COPE and climbing program managers and training program evaluators will be trained at the national level. COPE and climbing directors and instructors with current status will retain their status until the expiration date on their card.

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COPE and Climbing Program Staff Member Qualifications and Training

Staff Member	Prerequisite	Primary Training	Reevaluation	Min. Age
COPE instructor in training	none	COPE and climbing foundation training AND COPE Level I instructor training	Yearly	16
COPE Level I instructor	none	COPE and climbing foundation training AND COPE Level I instructor training	Yearly	18
COPE Level II instructor	COPE Level I instructor	COPE Level II instructor training	3 years	21
Low COPE Level I instructor	none	COPE and climbing foundation training AND Low COPE Level I instructor training	Yearly	18
Low COPE Level II instructor	Low COPE Level I instructor	Low COPE Level II instructor training	3 years	21
COPE program manager	COPE Level II instructor	NCS COPE/climbing program manager training	5 years	21
COPE training program evaluator	COPE Level II instructor	NCS training program evaluator training	5 years	21
Climbing instructor in training	none	COPE and climbing foundation training AND climbing Level I instructor training	Yearly	16
Climbing Level I instructor	none	COPE and climbing foundation training AND climbing Level I instructor training	Yearly	18
Climbing Level II instructor	Climbing Level I instructor	Climbing Level II instructor training	3 years	21
Climbing program manager	Climbing Level II instructor	NCS COPE/climbing program manager training	5 years	21
Climbing training program evaluator	Climbing Level II instructor	NCS training, program evaluator training	5 years	21
Portable climbing wall facilitator	none	Portable climbing wall facilitator training	Yearly	21
Bouldering facilitator	none	Bouldering facilitator training	Yearly	16

CC-14: All COPE and climbing programs are operated according to the guidelines contained in the chart in CC-13. All staff members may be considered as part of the staff to maintain the required ratio of staff to participants; however, instructors in training must be directly supervised by a Level I or Level II instructor.

A Level II instructor directly supervises the program and must be present at the program site except for bouldering or portable climbing walls.

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COPE and Climbing Program Staffing and Participant Requirements

Program	Program Supervision Requirements	Qualified Staff	Min. Staff	Ratio	Participant Minimum Age
Low COPE	Low COPE Level II instructor or COPE Level II instructor	Low COPE Level I instructor, Low COPE Level II instructor, COPE IIT	2	12:1	Generally age 13 or older. Younger participants may take part in events that match their maturity level as determined by the Level II instructor.
High COPE	COPE Level II instructor	COPE Level I instructor, COPE Level II instructor, COPE IIT	2	6:1	Generally age 13 or older. Younger participants may take part in events that match their maturity level as determined by the Level II instructor.
Artificial vertical climbing structure	COPE Level II instructor or climbing Level II instructor	COPE Level I instructor, COPE Level II instructor, COPE IIT, climbing Level I instructor, climbing Level II instructor, climbing IIT	2	6:1	Maturity evaluated by Level II instructor
Natural rock	Climbing Level II instructor	Climbing Level I instructor, climbing Level II instructor, climbing IIT	2	6:1	Maturity evaluated by Level II instructor
Bouldering	Bouldering facilitator or COPE Level I instructor or climbing Level I instructor	COPE Level I instructor, COPE Level II instructor, COPE IIT, climbing Level I instructor, climbing Level II instructor, climbing IIT	1	Determined by council policy	Maturity evaluated by facilitator
Portable climbing wall	Portable climbing wall facilitator or COPE Level II instructor or climbing Level II instructor	COPE Level I instructor, COPE Level II instructor, COPE IIT, climbing Level I instructor, climbing Level II instructor, climbing IIT	2	Determined by council policy	Maturity evaluated by facilitator

PROGRAM EQUIPMENT

CC-15: All equipment shall comply with ACCT standards when applicable. All specialized equipment needed for conducting a safe COPE and/or climbing program must be available to participants and staff members and approved by the appropriate COPE and Climbing committee. Personal climbing helmets and harnesses may be used if inspected and approved by the on-site Level II instructor. All manufactured equipment must be used and retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

CC-16: Each participant and staff member in the fall zone of a climbing site or COPE high-course site must wear a rock-climbing helmet.

CC-17: All climbing harnesses must be used and retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations or 10 years from the date first placed into service or when condition warrants, whichever comes first.

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CC-18: A written log of the history of each climbing rope used in the program must be kept, indicating (1) the date the rope was purchased; (2) the date the rope was placed in service; and (3) any environmental, severe, or unusual stresses that were placed on the rope. Each rope must be uniquely marked and permanently identified. All cordage used in life safety systems must be identified with the date of purchase. All cordage used in life safety systems must be retired according to the manufacturer's recommendations or when condition warrants or five years from the date placed into service or 10 years from the date of purchase, whichever comes first. Cordage attached to protection, e.g., tricams, SLCDs, hexcentrics, etc., need not be replaced every five years unless condition warrants.

CC-19: Equipment records are kept and include a complete inventory including retirement criteria based on manufacturer's recommendations.

CC-20: Staff members inspect all program equipment before and after each use and are taught how to inspect equipment for defects that render equipment unsafe for usage. Disposal of retired equipment is done in such a way that it cannot be retrieved.

CC-21: When not being used, equipment must be kept in locked, protected storage away from exposure to sunlight, heat, moisture, chemicals, and destruction or contamination by animals.

PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

CC-22: All participants who are members of the Boy Scouts of America must use the current Annual Health and Medical Record, No. 680-001, and follow the council's established medical screening procedures. For non-Scout groups, a medical health history/informed consent form (Challenge Course and Climbing Health History and Consent Form) is required for all participants. Participants should be asked to inform a Level II instructor of recent injuries or illnesses before participating. The Level II instructor will accommodate needs based on the medical or physical situation. For significant health concerns, an examination by a physician and consultation with a parent or guardian is appropriate.

PROGRAM SAFETY

CC-23: All COPE and climbing staff know and use written site-specific rules for opening and closing the program site, safety procedures, and recommended equipment used each time events or activities are held. This includes detailed information for disabling towers or high-course events when not in use.

CC-24: An instructor conducts a site and safety orientation for participants before the program activity. A written site-specific checklist is used at each orientation to ensure that all points are covered.

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CC-25: No participant is ever coerced or pressured into attempting an 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.

CC-26: Participants must engage in appropriate warm-up activities prior to participating in each COPE or climbing session.

CC-27: The technique of safe spotting is explained, demonstrated, and practiced before participants are permitted to engage in any activity requiring that skill.

CC-28: 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 any activity requiring those skills. Signals are consistent among all council programs. Backup belayers are required whenever possible.

CC-29: Participants are thoroughly trained in the proper use of specialized equipment before using it. Some activities may involve the use of equipment and techniques that are not covered in BSA instructor training. Staff members should consult with experts familiar with and trained in the use of this equipment prior to implementing the program in their council.

CC-30: The Level II instructor determines if a participant's safety might be compromised by course conditions, staffing, weather, or any other factor, and is empowered to open and close the COPE or climbing program. Staff members are trained to monitor environmental conditions and their effect on participants during challenging activities.

CC-31: All participants are top-roped when climbing. When transferring from one belay system to another, a consistent process is used to ensure that the new belay attachment is secure before the old system is disconnected. All rappelling participants are belayed. The following belay methods are allowed:

- Single-line rappel with an independent belay line
- Double-line rappel with an independent belay line
- Single-line rappel with a fireman's belay
- Double-line rappel with a fireman's belay

Belay system rigging must allow rappelling participants to be quickly and safely lowered if the rappel device becomes jammed (e.g., releasable rappel).

CC-32: Only trained COPE and climbing instructors may climb using lobster claws, rope grab, or cable grab (or similar tether systems) to self-belay above the anchor, such as during a staple climb. A load-limiting or fall-arresting device must be used in situations where there is little energy absorption inherent in the belay system.

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CC-33: Measures are in place to provide for the safety of everyone at the program site, including observers. Everyone must be belayed or anchored when within eight feet of an edge where a fall of more than shoulder height could occur.

CC-34: A consistent process is used by all program staff to ensure that clothing, head protection, equipment, connections, and knots are checked in any belayed events for staff members and participants. The CHECK program is strongly recommended (see last page of these standards).

CC-35: Written, site-specific incident resolution plans identifying possible emergencies, including rescues, and procedures for resolving them are reviewed with program staff members. Written, site-specific plans for emergency evacuations from program sites are developed and procedures rehearsed annually by program staff members.

CC-36: A reliable means of electronic emergency communication is available during program activities. In addition, a reliable backup emergency communication system is in place. For reasonable distances, sending participants/staff members with a message could be used as this backup, if another more reliable method of communication is unavailable.

CC-37: At least one person at the program site must have a valid certificate of training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and must be physically present whenever the program is in operation. Program sites located on BSA property must allow emergency evacuation in a reasonable length of time. If the program site is more than 30 minutes away from an emergency vehicle—accessible roadway, then a person trained to a minimum level of wilderness and remote first aid (16 hours) must be present at the program site.

CC-38: Medical supplies appropriate for likely injuries must be available at the program site. At least one person who is on-site during program operation must be trained in the use of all supplies on-site. Medical supplies must be accessible to instructors when the program is in operation.

CC-39: Equipment appropriate for likely course emergencies is accessible at the program site when the program is in operation.

CLIMBING STANDARDS

CR-1: Climbing or rappelling at natural sites is done on stable rock that is suitable for climbing and rappelling. If the climbing area has a designated place for onlookers, it is outside the fall zone.

CR-2: If portable climbing walls are used, the manufacturer's recommendations for setup and use (e.g., stabilizing, replacement frequency for auto-belay cables, etc.) and applicable climbing standards are followed, and the facility is inspected before and after each use.



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CR-3: All anchor systems must be fail-proof or backed up and the load equalized. Anchors are placed to provide the most effective protection for both the climber and the belayer. The belayer's position allows for no slack between the belay anchor, if used, and the belayer and must be in direct line with a potential fall.

CR-4: Bolts and hangers must be manufactured specifically for climbing purposes. The length of bolts is appropriate for the type of rock. Installation of climbing bolts on BSA property must have council approval. A written record is available indicating that anchor bolts and hangers on council property have been installed by a qualified person who has training and/or experience installing climbing bolts, and the anchor bolts and hangers have been checked at least twice annually by a qualified person. Pitons are never used in BSA climbing.

CR-5: Trees used as anchor points in a climbing anchor system must be well-rooted, healthy, at least six inches in diameter at the point of attachment, and protected from damage.

COPE STANDARDS

CO-1: Each belay anchor is placed to provide the most effective protection for both the climber and the belayer. Participants on high-event traversing elements are belayed on overhead belay cables with a movable dynamic belay system using a belayer or a static belay system using an observer. Where a ground belay anchor or belay cable is used, 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.

INTERPRETATION:

COPE and climbing programs can be based on BSA property or conducted on public or private property. These standards apply equally to any programs sponsored by councils or districts at any time of the year. Units wishing to conduct climbing programs should consult *Climb On Safely*, No. 430-099, and *Guide to Safe Scouting*, No. 34416. Unit leaders must complete Climb On Safely training (available online at scouting.org) prior to taking their units on climbing activities.

Staff training for COPE and climbing programs is generally the responsibility of the local council COPE and Climbing committee. These committees should work closely with professional staff and the camp director to ensure that quality training is provided for COPE and climbing staff for summer camp.

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VERIFICATION:

Evaluation of program documents:

- CC-4 Environmental policy
- CC-7 Maintenance checklist
- CC-8 Inspection documents
 - Last year's regional assessment record
 - Qualified inspector report for constructed facilities
 - ACCT standards
 - Bouldering inspection report
 - Portable climbing structure inspection report
 - Biannual council inspection reports
- CC-9 Incident records
- CC-10 Blank copies of agreements and hold harmless agreements for non-BSA groups' use
- CC-12 Site-specific staff training plan
- CC-13 Documentation of training for ALL COPE and climbing program staff members
 - COPE and climbing program manager
 - Level II instructors
 - Level I instructors
- CC-18 Rope logs
- CC-19 Equipment record/inventory
 - Including retirement criteria
- CC-23 Daily site-specific event operating procedures
 - Opening and closing procedures
 - Safety procedures
- CC-24 Site safety/orientation checklist
- CC-35 Emergency plans
 - Incident resolution plans
 - Emergency evacuation plans
- CR-4 Bolt and hanger installation and inspection records

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Observation of procedures in practice:

- Assessment during COPE and/or climbing staff training is an ideal venue.
- For programs that operate only during summer camp, the instructor training may take place during the staff preparation week.
- Assessments should be completed prior to the camp assessment so that documentation of the COPE and climbing assessment is available for the assessment team.

Standard CC-12: Evaluation of council-level training programs by training program evaluator (TPE)

- TPE is appointed by COPE and Climbing National Task Force
- Evaluation of the following every five years or less if conditions warrant
 - Training syllabus and materials
 - Training activities while in session
 - Written/computer-based and practical testing instruments
 - Documentation of completed training
- Most current evaluation in written form is available for the assessment team.

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BSA COPE AND CLIMBING STANDARDS ASSESSMENT FORM

Council _____ Number _____ Area _____ Region _____

Camp Name _____

The assessment was conducted on the following programs:

Climbing Walls _____ Climbing Towers _____ Bouldering Walls _____

Indoor Climbing Walls _____ Portable Climbing Towers _____ Natural Sites _____

COPE Course with _____ Low Elements and _____ High Elements

Assessment Team Led By:

Print name

Signature

Scout Executive or Designee

Print name

Signature

