

Mecklenburg County Council

COPE & Climbing

Bouldering Wall (Belk) SOP

Overview

The purpose of this document is to set a standard means to facilitate climbing on the bouldering wall structure at Belk Scout Camp.

Bouldering is an approved activity for scouts of all ages and ranks according to the BSA's *Age Appropriate Guidelines*. The *Guide to Safe Scouting* states that all scouts may participate in bouldering no higher than the climber's shoulder height.

Qualified Supervision and Instructors

The bouldering wall is considered an obstacle course or playground structure. As such it may be operated without supervision of a COPE or Climbing Director or Level II instructor. The bouldering wall may be used by scouts at any time under the supervision of a conscientious adult.

During district and council events the bouldering wall may be used as an activity station for scouts. During these events the bouldering wall will be supervised by a trained, qualified instructor such as a trained bouldering facilitator, COPE Level I instructor or climbing Level I instructor. The minimum staff required to open the bouldering wall for a district or council event is 1 qualified instructor.

To prevent crowding on the bouldering wall or climbers interfering with each other only one climber should be allowed on each side of the bouldering wall structure at a time. This results in a participant to staff ratio of 4 to 1. The climbers may climb around the corners of the structure from side to side (climbing around the structure in a circle). The supervising instructor should watch the climbers and warn them if they are too close together for safe climbing.

Equipment & Environment

There is no special equipment needed to facilitate climbing on the bouldering wall.

Clothing and Footwear

Scouts should be dressed as they would for climbing on the tower. No loose clothing or items dangling from their body. Shirts should be tucked in. Hair should be pulled back.

During district or council level events scouts may borrow climbing shoes from the storage closet but they are not required or necessary. The holds on the bouldering wall have been selected to allow scouts to climb in camp approved shoes (i.e. no sandals, open toed shoes, slides or flip flops).

Environment

The same restrictions apply to the bouldering wall as to the climbing tower when it comes to environmental conditions as per Weather Smart training.

Daily Inspection

Prior to use each day of a district or council level event the bouldering wall structure should be inspected. The qualified instructor must:

- Check for signs of insects or other animals including but not limited to nests, bore holes, droppings/feces, etc.
- Check the climbing faces for:
 - loose or rotting boards
 - exposed nails, bolts, screws
 - wood chips or splinters
- Check for loose or spinning holds
- Check the safety pads on each of the roof support posts
- Check the mulch around the base of the wall for foreign objects that could pose a hazard if a climber were to land on the object, i.e. large rocks, trash, pieces of metal, etc.

If anything is found amiss, the qualified instructor should report it to the lead director or level II instructor.

Outside of district or council level events, units should report to the camp ranger or camp master.

Safety Briefing

For district and council level events, the participants must be led in a safety briefing prior to climbing on the bouldering wall. This is similar to the briefing that is given for the climbing tower however there are some important differences. The following points must be covered:

- Listen to the instructor
- Climbing area is inside the supporting posts around the structure
 - Only climbers and spotters may be inside the supporting posts
 - Bystanders (other scouts, parents, adults, etc.) must remain outside of the posts while there are climbers on the structure
- Climbers may not climb above their own shoulder height
- No climbing on the roof structure or grabbing the roof
- No climbing on the supporting posts
- Review bouldering/spotting commands
- Review spotting techniques
- Review proper climbing attire

Bouldering Techniques

Climbers should be instructed that bouldering involves a focus on sideways movement with the climber's feet near the ground. Climbers are not to climb with their feet higher than their own shoulder height. Emphasis should be placed on controlled, balanced movement between holds. The goal is graceful movement from one hold to the next. This can be achieved by the climber focusing on their feet over their hands.

Spotting Techniques

Spotting techniques are covered in the BSA *Belay On* manual in chapter 25. Spotting means providing protection to a climber in such a way as to help prevent injury in case the climber falls. For district and council level events, the qualified instructor must review the spotting techniques with the participants and adults present before climbing on the bouldering wall may begin.

Verbal Commands for Bouldering and Spotting

For district and council level events, the following commands must be reviewed by the qualified instructor before climbing on the bouldering wall may begin. The commands ensure clear understanding of intentions and actions.

Boulderer/Climber	Spotters	Meaning
"Spotters ready?"		"I'm ready to start climbing."
	"Ready."	"We are ready to protect you."
"Climbing."		"I'll start as soon as the spotters give the go ahead."
	"Climb on."	"Go ahead."
"Falling!"		"I'm about to fall."

Supervising the Bouldering Wall

For district and council level events, while climbers are on the bouldering wall, the qualified instructor must be present. The instructor must watch for the following:

- Only climbers and spotters are inside the supporting posts. All others must remain outside of the posts.
- Only 4 climbers are allowed on the bouldering wall structure at one time.
- Climbers must have spotters present before and during all climbing.
- Listen for proper climbing/spotting commands
- Watch the spotters for proper spotting technique
- If mulch is dislodged from the base of the walls, replace or reposition as necessary
- If holds are loose or spinning tighten the holds using a wrench or appropriate tool from the storage closet
- Address any first aid issues using the first aid kit in the storage closet. Anything that requires more than basic first aid must be brought to the attention of the COPE/Climbing Level II instructor or director if present and/or the camp medical staff.

Daily Shutdown

At the conclusion of climbing on the bouldering wall each day, the qualified instructor should check the structure for any damage such as loose boards/wood, splinters, loose holds, dislodged mulch, etc. Any issues that the instructor cannot remedy him/herself must be reported to the lead director or level II instructor on site.