



Western Australian Adventure Activity Standard

Artificial Surfaces

Climbing

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Adventure Activity Standards benchmark the minimum industry requirements and responsibilities for organisations and leaders conducting outdoor adventure activities for commercial and non – commercial groups.

The Adventure Activity Standards are designed to be applied when the participants are, for the purposes of participating in the activity, either

- in a pre-existing group
 - where either the group members (and or its representative third party) have made a collective purchase of / collective decision to participate in the activity (ie a school, corporate or community group); or are
- formed into a new group
 - where the participants have purchased / made the decision to participate in the activity as individuals or smaller groups, but having done so become a part of a new group (ie citizens or tourists who, having purchased an activity from an organisation or leader individually, are formed into a group for the purposes of participating in the activity provided).

In all cases the relationship between the group of participants and the activity provider is one based upon dependence by way of contract and or duty of care.

The existence of other types of groups where the group is less defined and NOT dependent as a group upon an activity provider for the conduct of the activity is acknowledged. (ie independent club members participating in an activity; people going to a climbing gym to privately recreate; people trying a climbing wall at a fete). It is intended that such less defined groups of independent participants are not “captured” by the AAS.

The Western Australian Adventure Activity Standards were developed by an industry wide consultative process coordinated by Outdoors WA following the recommendations of the 2006 State Government Adventure Tourism Visitor Safety Task Force Report. The Project received grant funding via the Department of Sport and Recreation.

The development and implementation of the AAS allows the outdoor adventure industry to demonstrate its collective integrity and agreed standards. This, in turn will provide a measure of quality for the purposes of assisting

1. Consumers of our services to make informed choices about the services they select
2. Training organisations to produce graduates who understand and meet industry standards
3. Media, insurance and legal scrutineers of our industry and its members, to understand what is acceptable practice and what is not
4. The development of sustainable use practices that consider the specific natural and cultural heritage values of areas in which we conduct outdoor activities

The AAS are a critical component of the **industry quality framework** comprising four aligned and inter-connected components

1. **Accreditation** - the required business operating standards for businesses and organisations
2. **Adventure Activity Standards** - the minimum standards to which an activity must be conducted by a provider to dependent groups of participants
3. **Leader Registration Scheme** - the responsibilities and competencies required of the leaders conducting the outdoor activities
4. **Codes of Conduct** – the behavioural expectations of persons operating as outdoor leaders

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INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) have been developed to assist organisations and leaders to plan and conduct outdoor adventure activities with commercial and non-commercial groups of dependent participants (where there is a duty of care based in contract and or in authority).

The purpose of the AAS is to maintain the perception of adventure whilst simultaneously reducing / managing real risk for dependent participants. Increased outdoor physical activity with reduced incident and accident rates will be the ultimate performance indicators of the value of the AAS.

The AAS provide a valuable resource for the development of operating procedures, and or for the purposes of comparing existing operating procedures to industry agreed benchmarks. All groups differ in their collective skills and experience, in their degree of dependence upon the leader, and participate in activities at a range of sites with varying conditions (including weather). It **remains the responsibility of the leader to make the professional judgements and decisions concerning the conduct of the activity to ensure the safety of the group**. The AAS are designed to assist such judgements and decision making.

Whilst not statutory standards, the AAS provide the basis for policy formation and decision making by jurisdictions external to the outdoor adventure activity industry including, but not restricted to, licensing, insurance and legal jurisdictions.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The activity of artificial surfaces climbing is described as the process of ascending artificial surfaces.

The Artificial Climbing AAS applies to the use of any artificial climbing structures. These may be fixed or mobile, indoor or outdoor. Examples include climbing gyms, mobile climbing walls, school gymnasiums and fixtures intended for artificial climbing at adventure camps. Such artificial structures allow leaders to control aspects of the activity environment in which dependent participants climb.

Associated activities include bouldering. The activity of bouldering is described as rock climbing where no part of the body is higher than 2.4m off the ground and where adequate safety can be provided by 'spotting' and the landing surface rather than with the aid of additional systems involving a harness, belay mechanism and ropes.

*** Further details of artificial surfaces climbing operating procedures can be found in the Western Australian Roping Activities Code of Practice located at www.outdoorswa.org**

PLANNING and PREPARATION

The AAS provides a planning and preparation framework considered critical in maximising participant safety and enjoyment. All planning must be finalised and the relevant components documented before the activity is undertaken. A suggested planning and preparation framework includes

- Preliminary Information
- Site Plan
- Risk Management Plan
- Emergency Response Plan
- Minimal Environmental Impact Plan

Samples and suggested templates are available at www.outdoorswa.org

Preliminary Information

The following are the minimum information requirements for conducting an artificial surfaces climbing session

- Objectives / desired outcomes of the session (recommended only)
- Planned start and finish times
- Leader to participant ratio and group size (refer Leader : Participant Ratios and Group Size)
- Facility manager requirements including
 - access restrictions
 - group sizes
 - booking and permit requirements
- Equipment requirements (refer Equipment)
- Dependent participants' names and emergency contact details
- Medical information advised by dependent participants which may be relevant to the activity
 - Conditions - asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, fainting, allergic reactions, blood conditions which may effect bleeding/ blood clotting, recent or long-standing injuries, (eg back, knee, ankle), disability, pregnancy, repetitive strain injury
- Medications - what is it / why is it required / how is it administered? (excludes contracted third party situations ie community fete)
- Group members are advised, in writing and or in a verbal briefing, of
 - Potential risks associated with the activity
 - Zero tolerance requirements re alcohol and drugs other than prescription drugs NOT effecting the participant's ability to participate
 - The requirement to conform to responsible and attentive behaviour
- Participant signed legal liability disclaimer (informed consent) / waiver to sue / authorisation to seek / provide emergency medical treatment (retain for a time frame as dictated by the Statute of Limitations Act 2005); dependent participants under the age of 18 must have the signature of a parent / guardian if required by the organisation that has legal responsibility for them

Site Plan

The purpose of the site plan is to assess issues re access, environmental impact, risk and emergency communications relative to a particular site. The site plan shall provide details of

- pre-activity inspection of all aspects and components of the apparatus which may include
 - physical structures
 - materials and fittings
 - safety equipment
- assessment of the suitability of the climb for the size of the group
- access to and within the site
 - by vehicle including emergency services vehicles
 - on foot including to and from the nearest car park
- how to make an emergency contact and where is the best place to make these calls from
- site characteristics (difficulty, height, pitch, overhangs)
- opportunities / locations for rest breaks
- toileting facilities
- confirmation that the climbing structure meets required structural and maintenance standards

Samples and suggested templates are available at www.outdoorswa.org

Risk Management Plan

The purpose of the Risk Management Plan is to identify the human, site specific, equipment and environmental risks for the safe conduct of the activity. By identifying, analysing and evaluating these risks, appropriate strategies to reduce / manage the risk can be developed and implemented.

Artificial surfaces climbing leaders must assess the chosen facilities for potential hazards and adapt the planning of the activity as required. Information with regard to any new hazard must be made available within the group / organisation.

Samples and suggested templates are available at www.outdoorswa.org

The Risk Management Plan must consider

- Leader(s) have the required authorisation, skills, qualifications and experience to
 - conduct the climb(s)
 - satisfy the planned objectives
 - effectively manage incidents (refer Requirements of Leaders)
 - preserve the quality of fixtures and equipment
- Leader : Participant ratio (refer Leader : Participant Ratios and Group Size)
- Group size (refer Leader : Participant Ratios and Group Size)
- Group profile
 - Skill / experience levels
 - Needs / requirements

- Methods for managing the group at all times including
 - Climbers
 - Others waiting to climb
 - Others who have completed an climb
 - Others not in your group but who may spectate or be in other groups

Emergency Response Plan

The purpose of the Emergency Response Plan is to provide a set of steps for leaders to follow in the event of an emergency which may include injury or death. The plan must detail how to minimise the escalation of the situation, the injuries incurred and how to reduce the likelihood of further incidents occurring. The Emergency Response Plan must be site specific and document current details including

- Access and egress options
- Contingency plans for effective rescue
- Group assembly points
- Emergency contact details which may include
 - Site manager if a third party
 - Police
 - Relevant Agencies (EG facility owners / managers, rescue services)
 - Next stage of definitive medical care (hospital, doctor)
- Specific communication requirements / available networks

ALL leaders must have access to a copy and be fully aware of the emergency response plan.

Samples and suggested templates are available at www.outdoorswa.org

Leader : Participant Ratios and Group Size

Whilst it is acknowledged that the characteristics of the site, the profile of the group, the purposes of the climb and the experience of the leader will influence the ratios of leaders to dependent participants, the minimum ratios considered acceptable are

▪ **One Leader Situations**

Operational Ratio - applicable for registered leader to actual dependent participants 1:20

Operational Ratio - applicable for registered leader with additional responsible adult (who has had sufficient training to assist in belaying) to actual dependent participants 1:1:25

▪ **Two+ Leader Situations**

Operational Ratio - applicable for registered leaders with additional responsible adult (who has had sufficient training to assist in belaying) to actual dependent participants 2:1:50

Group size will be determined by both site characteristics and the application of the above ratios.

For the purposes of the artificial surfaces climbing AAS, a participant is defined as a person climbing or belaying or within 2m of a climb (excludes bouldering). These ratios are the minimum ratios. It is understood that different jurisdictions may impose ratios tighter than those above for reasons based within their own jurisdictions.

REQUIREMENTS OF LEADERS

The performance of the leader is a critical factor in the safe conduct of an artificial climbing activity. The leader is required to

- accept responsibility for the planning, preparation and conduct of the climb(s)
- maintain current skills, qualifications and experience as required

This does not exclude the fact that dependent participants are responsible for their own actions in relation to the potential risks that may be encountered by choosing to participate in an artificial climbing activity.

Responsibilities of Leaders

Leaders are required to accept the following responsibilities

- to use professional judgement to make decisions that will ensure the safety of all group members and maintain the integrity of the facility and equipment including matters relevant to
 - people based risks*
 - collect all documentation / forms signed by all dependent participants / parents or guardians (or ensure data is collected by the third party responsible for the group)
 - communicate the risks relating to the activity to the group in a pre-activity briefing
 - match the experience / capabilities of the group to the climbing activity
 - ensure all incidents and accidents are documented and reported in writing to Outdoors WA in writing within seven (7) days
 - site based risks*
 - appropriately manage hazards
 - be aware of and comply with the facility manager's guidelines
 - manage the participants effectively; ensure that your group behaves with respect for other users
 - ensure that all waiting dependent participants remain in a designated safe area and, if minors, are appropriately supervised by a responsible adult
 - equipment based risks*
 - ensure the climbing structure has appropriate maintenance records
 - check suitability, condition and use of all equipment prior to, during and on return
 - ensure correct use of equipment by all dependent participants
 - maintain and service all equipment in keeping with manufacturer's specifications
 - ensure that a First Aid Kit and communication equipment are in good order

**** to be read and applied in conjunction with additional details in the Western Australian Roping Activities Code of Practice***

Competencies of Leaders

Leaders require a range of technical and group facilitation skills to effectively conduct group artificial surfaces climbing activities. Leaders are deemed to be competent to lead artificial surfaces climbing activities if

- they are currently registered in the National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme (NOLRS)* as an artificial surfaces climbing guide or instructor (NOLRS - administered by Outdoors WA on behalf of the Outdoor Council of Australia) which requires
 - a recognised qualification or skill set
 - sufficient current experience
 - appropriate first aid qualifications
 - within one hour from definitive medical care – Senior First Aid required
 -

** registration with NOLRS must be achieved by 31 January 2011*

** further information about NOLRS including how to register is available at www.outdoorswa.org*

** the registration achieved must align with the specific form of artificial surfaces climbing to be undertaken ie. Single Pitch Climbing Guide Artificial Surfaces*

** NOLRS status for Climbing Natural Surfaces is deemed sufficient for leading Climbing Artificial Surfaces activities*

EQUIPMENT

Participant's Equipment*

The following equipment requirements apply to all dependent participants

- Harness specifically manufactured for rock climbing/artificial climbing and which adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent; must be used in accordance with manufacturers' specifications
- Clothing appropriate to the requirements of the site and weather conditions, and to prevent rope burn
- Participant's personal medications
- All equipment must be used in accordance with the manufacturers' specifications

Leader's Equipment* (excluding "restricted guides")

Leaders require to access to all equipment as listed in Participant's Equipment in the case of an emergency

Group Equipment*

The following equipment is required for all dependant group artificial surfaces climbing activities

- Climbing structure construction that meets the Australian Standard as certified by an engineer
- Ropes and all protective equipment (karabiners, slings, belay devices and chocks) which adhere to UIAA, CE, ANSI or equivalent must be manufactured specifically for Challenge Ropes Courses / rock climbing / abseiling and used according to the manufacturer's specifications and accepted practice
- Recognised purpose built belay devices (for example grigri, stitch plate)
- Emergency communication equipment (for example telephone, mobile phone)
- A First Aid Kit appropriate for the level of training completed and the size of the group

** to be read and applied in conjunction with additional details in the Western Australian Roping Code of Practice*

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Activity Provider** – an entity, person or group of persons assuming the role of providing the activity (the activity provider) for a group of dependent persons for a specific commercial or not – for – profit purpose
- **Dependent Group / Participant** – a group or individual within a group whose welfare associated with participating in the activity is in part the responsibility of the leader; who is dependent upon the leader for their safe participation in the activity which may be so deemed by law or contract
- **Outdoor Leader** - term for an individual accepting the roles of leading and managing the outdoor activity; can be a guide or instructor; can be paid or voluntary; must be a registered leader in NOLRS
- **Competency** - minimum industry agreed standard of skill and knowledge necessary for a specific activity being conducted at a specific level
- **Responsible Adult** – adult person deemed, by the outdoor leader, as adequately capable of accepting responsibility for selected aspects of the management of the group and or its participants in conjunction with the safe conduct of the activity
- **UIAA** – Union Internationale des Associations d’Alpinisme
- **CE** – European Community
- **ANSI** – American National Standards Institute
- **Belay** - technique of controlling the rope so that a falling climber does not fall very far. This task is assigned to a belayer. The term belay is also used to mean the place where the belayer is anchored. Control of the rope is achieved through applying friction, which allows control of the speed at which the rope slides past the belayer. This friction is generally achieved by forcing the rope through tight bends and past rough surfaces. Belaying is a critical part of the climbing system. By using a correct belaying method, the belayer can hold the entire weight of the climber by using relatively little force, and can easily arrest even a long fall. By using a mixture of belaying angle and hand-grip on the rope, a climber can be lowered gently by the belayer to a safe point where climbing can be resumed
- **Bouldering** - a style of rock climbing undertaken without a rope and normally limited to very short climbs so that a fall will not result in serious injury. Bouldering is a style of climbing emphasizing power, strength, and dynamics. Its focus is on individual moves or short sequences of moves. For protection, climbers typically put a bouldering mat (crash pad) on the ground to break their fall and have one or more spotters, who work to direct the climber's body toward the crash pad during a fall, while protecting the climber's head from hazards
- **Spotting** - a technique used where participants are close to the ground and ropes are not used. The spotter stands below the participant, with arms raised or at the ready. If the participant falls, the spotter does not catch the participant but redirects the participant’s fall so that they land safely. At the very least the spotter ensures that the participant's head and back do not strike the ground directly. If the participant jumps down, the spotter can also help prevent stumbles and injuries on uneven ground. When spotting you should always use "spoons" (all fingers together) because fingers can be broken if your fingers are spread apart. A spotter should always be used for accident prevention. A spotter will typically hold their arms up with hands in a supporting position for more or less vertical climbs. When the participant falls, the spotter’s hands lightly hold the participant’s hips or lower back, near

their centre of gravity. This allows the spotter to help guide the participant's fall effectively, helping them keep the centre of gravity over their feet. When on steeper, past vertical activities, the spotter will hold their arms out in a cradling position. If the participant were to unexpectedly fall, the spotter supports the upper and middle back, helping the participant, land on their feet

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Adventure Activity Standards initially developed by The Outdoor Recreation Centre in Victoria proved to be an invaluable resource in the development of the Western Australian Adventure Activity Standard for artificial surfaces climbing.

FEEDBACK, REVIEW & APPEALS

The AAS are designed to be 'living' standards with feedback, requests for review and/or appeal against aspects of a standard considered to be healthy part of the development process, one that will ensure the currency & relevancy of the standards. Feedback, requests for review and/or appeals will be managed by the Industry Standards Panel. Details and proformas are available at www.outdoorswa.org / industry quality framework / Industry Standards Panel.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Outdoors WA for further information or to obtain contact details of the organisations conducting artificial climbing activities and training.

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