

Good questions guys,

When I facilitate or help facilitate a group climb I always try to follow each and every one of the "insurance standards" mentioned earlier in this thread. Common sense says, though, that there occasionally will be a situation where one or two of those standards has to be either amended or ignored. I don't think anyone (with the possible exception of the anal-retentive lawyer from the insurance company) will have any problems with that as long as it's done to create a safer climbing environment.

When I climb solo or only with other experienced climbers I am guilty quite often of not following every standard. For example, in my personal climbing I most often use the lightweight sportline rather than the "suggested" heavy, 16-strand rope. There have been a few occasions when, for weight reasons on a long hike to the tree, I have also climbed in a "Swiss Seat" harness made from 1-1/2 or 2 inch tubular webbing. I have also been known to (gasp!) climb without a helmet

So, what part or parts of the above insurance standards are pertinent to recreational treeclimbing?

In my opinion, every bit of it is pertinent to "facilitated" group climbs.

In other climbs, when there are only experienced climbers around, I think it is the responsibility of the individual to decide which standards apply to specific situations. Or, it could be that other standards not listed above should apply to the situation.

I'm personally in favor of having ONLY broadly worded standards for recreational treeclimbers (such as 22 kN for all parts of the life-safety system), without requiring the climber(s) to have to purchase expensive equipment from only one supplier or manufacturer.

Y'all might want to contact some of the other instructors who were at the July 2003 meeting in Atlanta, to find out if they disagree with my assessment of the above "insurance standards."

Good luck and keep on climbin',
Wild Bill from Dawsonville
wcmaher@alltel.net

for your consideration

Posted by Wild Bill - 10/20/2005 02:55pm

To all interested climbers:

In July 2003 four tree-climbing instructors – me, Tim Kovar, Abe Winters and John Routon – met at a coffee house in east Atlanta to discuss a proposal that was titled "Insurance Standards." Bob Remenapp in Michigan was contacted by telephone during the meeting and was filled in on the discussion. Peter Jenkins had been invited to the meeting but could not attend. Joe Maher was in Boca del Drago, Panama and not able to attend. It is not known if anyone was able to reach Genevieve Summers to invite her. The meeting lasted about four hours.

We started with a printed one-page sheet of ideas that Tim brought which covered 37 suggested requirements. Other instructors added four more suggested requirements and deleted several that were considered redundant or not necessary.

We agreed at the start of the meeting that the proposed "insurance standards" should apply only to facilitated group climbs. We also agreed that it would not be something "written in stone," but instead would be a set of standards that would be reviewed and revised as necessary. When we discussed issues such as specific pieces of equipment or preferred types of climbing systems, we decided those should be left up to the individual instructor/facilitator. For example: we did not want to promote one manufacturer over another, and we did not want to specify that "only a five-three Blake's Hitch should be used" when there were a number of other perfectly legitimate and recognized configurations of the Blake's Hitch.

After the meeting, Tim posted the final draft of the standards on the old Internet message board that was in use at that time by Tree Climbers International. I was not able to find that posting through the new TCI message board, which came online in the early fall of 2003, so I re-created it from my notes and tried my best to keep from making any editorial

changes. To the best of my knowledge this is an accurate re-creation of the final draft:

Section 1 – Instructor/facilitator requirements:

- Take the proper courses and stay up-to-date with other instructors on new information.
- Have First Aid/CPR certification via Red Cross.
- Partake in rescue techniques and have all rescue gear at site for all climbs.
- Be able to provide and use proper equipment at all times.
- Be physically and mentally aware of the climbing situation.
- Only the instructor or facilitator will tie all the knots prior to the climb.
- Check all forms for signatures prior to climbing.
- Make sure safety “slip” knots are tied for each climber.
- Go over basic instructions with precise directions (by using your written cue cards).
- Know limitations of the climber-to-instructor ratio.
- Instructor/facilitator has his/her harness always ready during the climb and be ready to enter the tree if necessary.
- Have accident report forms and after-action report forms ready to be filled out after the climb.
- Be aware of the weather forecast and any changes in the weather throughout the climb, and be prepared to act appropriately.
- Have an emergency action plan ready.

Section 2 – Gear standards/grove requirements:

- Proper harnesses, saddles, helmets, carabiners, pulleys and other hardware all meet ANSI specifications and are inspected before and after every climb.
- Only arborist ropes are to be used, and must be inspected before and after every climb.
- Gloves and croakies for eyeglasses are available.
- First aid kit will be available at every climb.
- Rescue rope for facilitator or lead climber must be ready.
- Tree is accessible for emergency situations.
- Telephone (or cell phone) is accessible.
- Grounds have been cleared of any hazards (bees nests, potholes, poison ivy, etc.)
- Tree is inspected before every climb by instructor/facilitator.
- Tree climbing rules and regulations are briefed and posted for all to see and/or hear.
- Release forms and medical forms are available and filled out.
- Drinking water is available.
- Tree is a safe distance from power lines and has been cleared and inspected for safety.

Section 3 – Climber requirements:

- All forms must be signed and the climber must have read all the rules and regulations before climbing.
- It is recommended that all climbers be at least seven years old.
- A parent or guardian (including official scoutmasters, group leaders, etc) must be present at the climb for anyone younger than the age of 18.
- Climbers are not allowed to take anything aloft that may be a hazard in the tree.
- All loose items must be secured to the climber or harness before climbing.

Section 4 – Non-climber requirements:

- Non-climbers shall stay away from the climbing area so as to not interfere with instructors/facilitators directions.
- Will need to keep pets on leashes and away from the climbing area.
- No smoking within the climbing area.
- Obey the lists of rules.

I hope this will be of some assistance.

Keep on climbin',

Wild Bill Maher

wcmaher@alltel.net

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Many Thanks!

Posted by Treeman - 10/20/2005 05:18pm

Thanks for digging up your notes. All of the old postings were lost when the new software for this message board were installed.

Comments please from the community.

This gives the tree climbing community an idea of things a climbing facilitator/instructor considers while running instruction and climbing events.

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Posted by charlieb - 10/24/2005 11:11pm

"We agreed at the start of the meeting that the proposed "insurance standards" should apply only to facilitated group climbs."

Since these were standards for facilitated group climbs or schools, are we as community supposed to pick and choose which would apply to the entire community as a whole? --So that we can incorporate them into the overall standards affecting the entire RTC culture?
In other words, at the risk of sounding nieve, what should we do with this wonderful list since it applies to a very narrow part of the RTC community?(schools or fac.group climbs)

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Posted by NickfromWI - 10/25/2005 02:53am

Charlie- you wrote exactly what I thought. This list is VERY useful, but not broadly applicable.

What parts ARE we interested in, though?

love
nick

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