



U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207-0001

TO: ALL AMUSEMENT RIDE SAFETY OFFICIALS
IMPORTANT
AMUSEMENT RIDE SAFETY BULLETIN!
RE: Mobile Rock Walls & Climbing Walls

Issued August 4, 2003

To prevent injury and death, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) staff requests all owners, operators, state safety officials and those firms that rent climbing walls to private parties, to closely inspect the climbing walls and all equipment in accordance with manufacturers' instructions and guidelines for operation, repair, maintenance and set-up.

With the support of the University of Missouri Police and the Missouri State Fire Marshals Office, we investigated a tragic incident that occurred in Columbia, MO on July 14, 2003. A 22 year old female died while climbing a mobile rock wall when the auto-belay cable attached to her harness broke. The victim fell to the concrete below. The cable in the area of the break was covered by a black rubber sheath, and there was duct tape wrapped around the cable. The broken cable was corroded and frayed under the rubber sheath where it was not visible during normal operation. The other two cables of this three-climber also showed significant signs of wear.

Mobile climbing walls are customarily used at fairs, carnivals, festivals, sporting events, and promotional events. The mobile climbing walls can also be operated at private fairs and parties through rental agencies. Users of rock walls or climbing walls vary in age from children to adults. There are about 1,000 units of varied sizes (3, 4, and 5 climbers) of mobile rock walls and climbing walls operational in the U.S., according to industry estimates.

The three major manufacturers of rock/climbing wall mobile amusements (Extreme Engineering, Newcastle, CA; Spectrum Sports, Logan, UT; and Vertical Reality, Miami, FL) are cooperatively working with CPSC staff to alert operators and safety officials of the need to inspect and properly maintain the equipment to prevent further incidents.

Inspection procedures and guidelines for safe set-up and operation of 'rock walls and climbing walls' may vary from ride to ride, state to state or from manufacturer to manufacturer. It is critical that you follow manufacturer's requirements. The CPSC staff provides the following additional guidance:

- Examine auto-belay cables, especially near pulleys, for wear, broken wires, 'fish hooks' (burrs/broken strands of wire cable), and deformation.

- Lift or slide the plastic or rubber sheath over the auto-belay cable on the patron/harness end and examine for wear, corrosion, broken wires, ‘fish-hooks’, etc. Replace cables if any are worn, corroded, have broken wires or ‘fish-hooks’.
- Follow the owner/operator’s manual regarding repair, maintenance and parts replacement.
- Inspect daily the auto-belay cables for ‘fish-hooks’, wear, and corrosion; replace annually or after 10,000 documented cycles, or earlier if necessary.
- Examine carabiners, swivels and rings for proper functioning and locking, and replace those not functioning properly.
- Examine harnesses for wear and tearing and replace if necessary.
- Maximum recommended weight per passenger is 250lbs, or per manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Make sure the required number of operators is present on 3, 4, and 5 climber walls.
- DO NOT exceed manufacturer’s requirements for maximum loads for individual walls.

In addition, we recommend that state inspectors provide this bulletin to rental companies within their state and to owners and operators of these rides.

We urge all state and local amusement ride safety inspectors, insurance inspectors and private contract inspectors, as well as owners and operators of "Rock Walls or Climbing Walls" to follow and adhere to the above guidance during inspection. Please contact manufacturers if you have further questions regarding



inspection details or parts replacement. Please inform CPSC if you encounter particular safety problems.

For further information contact:

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