

Risk Assessment Activity – Abseiling

Pioneer Centre	Assessed by: James Kniffen	Assessed/Reviewed:	Next Review Date
		09/01/2023 06/01/2025 12/12/2025	12/12/2026
Reviewed by:	Assist Chief: Max Bishop		
Reviewed by:	Senior Instructors: Andrew Evrard, Joseph Page, Steph McMenemy, Kieren Plant and Ronan Halpenny Lead Instructors: Rebecca Arms		Dec 2025

Overview: Abseiling is carried out on three purpose-built towers supplied and erected by JM Adventure and Adventure Rope Co Ltd. An annual inspection is carried out by High Times Technical Consultants. Regular bimonthly inspection checks are also carried out on equipment by activities staff as well as a quarterly structural check. A qualified Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI) Chief Instructor has overall responsibility. All other instructors are RCI or CWI qualified, or in-house trained using NGB recognized techniques. An examination to check competency of staff is completed on each staff member by the external and independent Technical Advisor which is valid for 3 years. This process is periodically checked and validated by the Technical Advisor and senior staff members do continual monitoring throughout the year. Preferred Staff to Client ratio is 1:12 and a maximum of 1:16 under supervision (under instruction 1: 1 instructor to abseiler ratio). All appropriate personal protective equipment is worn during these sessions. All instructors are first aid trained and emergency procedures are in place in case of a major accident.

Hazards	Groups of People at Risk from the Hazards Identified	Probability	Control Measures – Reduces the severity and lowers the probability to acceptable levels
		Severity	
		Risk Category	
Structural Failure	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Very unlikely	Towers are built by approved contractors, and external annual inspections are carried out and repairs and guidance from reports are followed. Quarterly structural checks are carried out. The maximum number of participants on a tower is 15 plus staff on the activity.
		Fatal	
		Medium	
Falling objects	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Unlikely	Helmets are worn by anyone in the area when activities are being delivered or maintenance is being done and guests briefed on how to stand to protect themselves if objects are dropped. All equipment at top of tower secured and emergency procedures in place in case of an accident. Guests are advised to remove things from pockets or have them stored safely in zipped pockets.
		Major	
		Medium	
		Very likely	

Unauthorized access to Towers	Guest/participants, and general public	Fatal High	Tower doors locked and shut when not in use and the abseiling ropes are pulled up to the top of the tower between sessions to avoid people climbing up them. The only access to towers is via a trained member of staff. No access signs are clearly displayed. The groups are given a brief of areas that are prohibited to enter without Centre staff.
Rope burns	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Unlikely Minor Low	Group briefed on correct clothing. Instructor supervises guests contact with rope. Instructors are trained in safe lowering practices (lowering slowly and smoothly) and are given gloves that can be used to belay in which helps reduce the risk of friction burns.
High level fall	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Very Unlikely Fatal Medium	Detailed in-house training & assessments are carried out on activity staff to ensure safe access and practice is used for the activities and the correct use of all equipment. A permanent lanyard/staff safety is left up on abseiling to allow instructors to access the tower edge without risk on setup and pack down. All PPE is checked and recorded bimonthly. Clear briefing on accessing the edge for abseiling is given and instructors ensure that no one goes out the gate for abseiling without being clipped into a safety rope. Instructors ensure participants are wearing all PPE before partaking in abseiling. Gates are monitored by staff and group leaders encouraged to help monitor the gates to prevent unclip participants heading out onto the abseil platform.
Environmental Hazards	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Unlikely Fatal High	All participants are briefed on proper clothing for the current weather conditions. Instructors are issued appropriate PPE waterproof jacket, warm layers, and gloves to use for activity delivery. Towers not used or sessions cancelled in the event of thunder & lightning (activities can resume 30mins after last thunder sound was heard) and/or wind gusts above 40/45mph (senior staff may reassess and end sessions below this level or may let continue if direction is suitable and hazards are managed). Also, further control measures under the Adverse Weather Risk Assessment are to help with environmental hazards.
Slips, trips and falls	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Likely Minor Medium	Maintenance of site is done by the activities team and maintenance team. Instructors visually check the area upon arrival. General brief and group management are provided by instructors to ensure activities are run safely and guests should follow the no running safety rule when in the activity area.
Soft tissue injury	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Unlikely Minor Low	Instructors are aware of group's capabilities and encourage group to warm up/warm down as needed.
Physiological effects	Guest/participants	Very unlikely Major Medium	Instructors are aware of the group's needs and medical issues. Challenge by choice brief is given and instructors will respect participants' choices and be sensitive and adapt to their reactions to the activity they are invited to participate in.

Stress / Panic Attack	Guest/participants	Unlikely	Challenge by choice brief is given and instructors will respect participants' choices. Instructors will err on the side of caution if participants start to panic or have strong emotional reaction to the activity. The instructors will react quickly to ensure the level of stress is brought back down to an acceptable level. This should help ensure the activity runs well for all those involved.
		Major / trauma	
		Medium	
Helmet suspension (caught on an element)	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Very Unlikely	Lowering practices taught that prevent helmets catching on elements e.g. slow careful lowering of participants in the correct position.
		Major	
		Medium	
Hair/Fingers caught in belay device	Guest/participants	Likely	Instructors give a clear demo at the beginning of the session and remind participants as they go down to keep their hands and hair away from belay device. Hair will be encouraged to be tied back.
		Minor	Rescues are learned by all staff delivering abseil sessions and practice done once a quarter as a minimum to refresh the procedures.
		Medium	