

Risk Assessment Activity – Wheelchair Abseiling

Pioneer Centre	Assessed by: James Kniffen		Assessed/ Reviewed:	Next Review Date
			20/01/2023 08/01/2025	10/01/2026
Reviewed by:	Assist Chief: Max Bishop			
Reviewed by:	Senior Instructors: Andrew Evrard, Joseph Page, Steph McMenemy & Kieren Plant Lead Instructors: Ronan Halpenny			
<p>Overview: Wheelchair abseil sessions are carried out on a purpose-built tower that has wheelchair access to the top and bottom. A Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI) qualified Chief Instructor has overall responsibility. All other instructors are RCI or CWI qualified, or in-house trained using NGB recognised techniques. An in-house examination is completed on each staff member by the Technical Advisor to sign off general competency in roped activities and further specific training is given for delivery of wheelchair abseiling sessions. This process is periodically checked and validated by the independent Technical Advisor. Preferred Staff to client ratio are a minimum of 2 instructors for the group (any size) for the wheelchair abseil. All appropriate personal protective equipment is worn during sessions. All instructors are first aid trained and emergency procedures are in place in case of a major accident.</p>				
Hazards	Groups of People at Risk from the Hazards Identified	Probability	Control Measures – Reduces the severity and lowers the probability to acceptable levels	
		Severity		
Structural Failure	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Risk Category	Ab Slab was built by the maintenance team of that time (2013) and signed off by JM Adventures (approved contractors) who put in the steel girders for anchor points. An external annual structural inspection is carried out by High Times and actions followed up as advised.	
		Very unlikely		
		Fatal		
Falling down the ramp	Instructors, carers and participants	Medium	Instructors, carers and participants must be attached to lanyards or rope if on the top of Ab Slab whenever the final chain barriers are removed for the participant to descend.	
		Unlikely		
		Fatal		
		High		

Falling backwards down the ramp in wheelchair	Participants	Unlikely	Participants firmly apply brakes after moving into position for setting up the abseil. An instructor is always behind the participant holding them steady. Participants are attached to all necessary fall prevention and fall arrest devices and ropes before final chain barriers are taken down. Staff and participants are connected to anchors before barriers are taken down for the abseil. Guests are told or helped to put breaks on at the bottom of the tower to avoid rolling off after finishing the descent.
		Major	
		Medium	
Tipping over backwards in the chair whilst being lowered down the ramp	Participants	Unlikely	The rope system is carefully tied onto the chair to ensure it can't tip backwards. An instructor abseils down behind the guest and can assist in any potential issues as required. Also, a specific chair has been purchased and used and is designed so to prevent it tipping over backwards.
		Fatal	
		High	
Fingers caught in equipment (wheels or other metal work)	Participants	Unlikely	Participants are properly briefed on their role during the descent. An instructor abseils down beside the guest to ensure no equipment is near the participant's hands.
		Major	
		Medium	
Rope Burn	Participants, instructors and carers	Very Unlikely	All ropes are safely controlled. Participants and carers are properly briefed on the lowering procedure and understand what ropes will be moving and where to safely observe.
		Minor	
		Low	
Environmental Hazards	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Very likely	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 winds 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.)
		Fatal	
		Medium	

Slips, trips and falls	Instructors, staff and guest/participants	Likely	Maintenance of the site is done by the activities team and maintenance team. Instructors visually check the area upon arrival. General brief and group management is provided by instructors to ensure activities are run safely.
		Minor	
		Medium	
Equipment / rope system failure	Participants and instructors	Unlikely	All equipment is inspected bimonthly. To run these sessions staff are trained in set up and delivery and work along more senior staff.
		Major	
		Medium	
Back up failure for instructor (prusik incorrectly set up) Injury from falling down the abseil	Guest/participants	Unlikely	Instructors are all in-house trained and assessed on how to set up and use a prusik (back up) for abseiling alongside participants. They are also trained on how to tie off the rope so they can go hands free to assist or sort out any problems.
		Major	
		High	
Physiological effects	Guest/participants	Very unlikely	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.
		Major	
		Medium	
Stress / Panic Attack	Guest/participants	Likely	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	
		High	