



CLIMBING WALL ASSOCIATION

# Lines: The CWA Newsletter

**Vol. 1, No. 2**

**September 1, 2005**

## Welcome

Welcome to the the second edition of Lines, the Climbing Wall Association newsletter. You will find some important news about efforts related to the development of industry standards, the CWA's adoption of standard setting policies, and the transition from indoor to outdoor climbing in this issue.

If you have suggestions or content for future editions, we would love to hear from you! Submitting articles to Lines is easy, and there's virtually no limit to what you can write. All we ask is that your article align with CWA's mission, and is of interest to our members. Issues of Lines may include feature articles, news briefs, profiles, notices, and reviews.

This is your chance to let the climbing community know about the news, events, and people everyone should know about. Submit all content to [bill@climbingwallindustry.org](mailto:bill@climbingwallindustry.org), and please include your contact information.

Thanks for writing!

Regards,

Bill Zimmermann,  
Executive Director

## A Letter from the Board Chair

Dear CWA Colleagues,

A segment of the indoor climbing industry that has been on hold for the past several years is the publication of building standards used by wall manufacturers and their engineers when building manufactured climbing walls. These standards have been referred to as the CWIG (Climbing Wall Industry Group) draft standards. They have been used by engineers in calculating load specifications when a manufacturer designs and builds climbing walls.

The CWIG draft standards have been sitting idle in the ASTM process. It is the goal of the CWA to adopt these standards and to make them available to the public. The process for doing so was put into place last year by forming a climbing wall manufacturers committee. The committee met and discussed the concept of having the CWA adopt the standards and agreed to have a vote to approve or turn down the proposal to do so. That vote will be taking place within the next month.

If the vote is in favor of adopting the standards, the CWA will then contact ASTM and request a transfer to the CWA. It is important that these standards be made available to the public, and that they are put through a legitimate process of up- dates through member input, which is outlined in the CWA Policies and Procedures for the Development and Maintenance of Climbing Wall Standards. This is another strong effort by the CWA to represent the climbing industry with the mission of providing industry risk management services and promoting industry self-regulation.

Best Regards,

Rich Johnston, Chair  
Board of Directors

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## Climbing Indoors vs. Outdoors

Many climbing wall operators have heard the question, “how do I get started climbing outdoors?” For most of us in the business that represents an opportunity to get customers more involved in the sport of climbing and hopefully create a loyal long term customer. But the other side of that question is the potential for a novice climber to get themselves into trouble, because they do not have the skills to manage the objective risks of outdoor climbing.

I harken back to the 1970s and the countless hours of following an experienced climber prior to my first lead, with the sage advice of “just don’t fall.” Times are much different now with climbing gyms and better equipment, but gravity still works, and learning the skills needed to climb in a controlled environment like a climbing wall are not necessarily adequate for climbing outdoors.

What can a climbing wall operator do? One option is to insert a clause in your ever expanding participant agreement (liability release) form that states that indoor climbing does not prepare a person for the objective risks encountered in climbing outdoors. Or, you can provide a verbal warning during your climbing instruction classes. Of course you could offer classes specifically designed to help your clients make the transition to outdoor climbing. Whatever you decide to do, your customers will thank you for it! Talk with your legal counsel and your staff to develop a strategy that works best for your operation.

Bob Richards,  
CWA Board Member

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## **International Artificial Climbing Wall Standards**

The UIAA Safety Committee Meeting was held between May 17th and 21st, 2005 in Chamonix, France. The European Standards Commission (CEN) and the International Competitive Climbing Commission (ICCC) have asked the UIAA Safety Committee (SafeCom) to provide international standards for artificial climbing walls; both rock and ice. The request is the result of non-EU countries objecting to the use/adoption of European standards. CEN has been in the process of developing its own climbing wall standards.

The CE-standards pertaining to structures are split into 3 parts:

00136195 prEN 12572-1 Artificial Climbing Structures - Part 1: Safety requirements and test methods for ACS with protection points. Under Approval.

00136196 prEN 12572-2 Artificial Climbing Structures - Part 2: Safety requirements and test methods for bouldering walls. Under development, planned for release in 2008.

00136197 prEN 12572-3 Artificial climbing structures - Part 3: Safety requirements and test methods for holds. Under development, planned for release in 2008.

The work on Artificial Climbing Structures Part 1 (prEN 12572-1) is complete or largely complete and under approval. Jean-Franck Charlet of France (UIAA SafeCom Committee President) will be coordinating a working group of wall manufacturers to address UIAA standards development. We presume that the current state of the CEN standards will be used as the basis for further UIAA standards work. No work has been done concerning artificial ice walls, though a pair of recent competition ice wall collapses points to the importance of such work.

The next meeting of the UIAA SafeCom will be held June 12-17, 2006 in Italy.

## **CWA Adopts Policy for Standards Development**

The Climbing Wall Association sets standards for the manufactured climbing wall industry and maintains standards for the operations of climbing wall facilities (the Industry Practices). The Board of Directors approved a draft policy document developed by the CWA staff entitled "Policies and Procedures for the Development and Maintenance of Climbing Wall Association Standards." The policy was drafted in May and June and approved on August 26th, 2005.

The policy was drafted to conform to the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI's) core requirements for standards development. The policies were drafted to incorporate sound practices for standards development including requirements for due process, openness, lack of dominance, balance, fair notice, consideration of various points of view, objections, and appeals in the development of consensus standards. The document defines the policies and procedures for the development, approval, revision, reaffirmation, interpretation, and withdrawal of all future CWA standards.

The existence of this policy will allow the Board of Directors to delegate authority to a standards committee (or committees) to develop and maintain CWA standards. It is important for the industry to address issues regarding the use and safety of products, facilities, and services related to manufactured climbing walls. CWA standards are intended to promote industry self-regulation, and to provide useful information to government, consumers, manufacturers, and owners of climbing walls. The absence of standards in these areas is detrimental to the industry in the long term.

For more information about CWA standards or standards policy. Please contact Bill Zimmermann.

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## **The Access Fund BoulderProject Initiative**

The BoulderProject is a youth outreach initiative designed to inform climbers about bouldering area stewardship and conservation issues. The Access Fund and the Climbing Wall Association recognize the important role of climbing gyms in shaping the "climbing culture" in relation to conservation and safety practices in outdoor climbing. Both the Access Fund and the CWA promote the responsible use and enjoyment of outdoor climbing resources.

Today the majority of climbers who climb outdoors got their start in a climbing gym. The Access Fund, through the BoulderProject, is developing tools to teach minimum impact and conservation practices specifically designed to be implemented in climbing gyms. The BoulderProject will utilize a variety of activities and educational materials to get the message out.

As the operator of a climbing wall and a CWA member, you have an important role in influencing the attitudes of many people that make the transition to outdoor climbing. We would like you to have the

opportunity to provide input on the BoulderProject. Your input will be useful in helping to develop tools that you and your clients will find informative and useful as they transition to climbing outdoors.

Questions about the BoulderProject, the questionnaire, or the Access Fund can be directed to: Deanne Buck, [deanne@accessfund.org](mailto:deanne@accessfund.org) or 303.545.6772 x112.

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## Outdoor Recreation Participation Study Released

The seventh edition of the Outdoor Industry Foundation's "Outdoor Recreation Participation Study" has been released. The Outdoor industry Foundation's study began in 1998 tracking participation among Americans age 16 and older in outdoor recreation activities. The study measures participation in 22 activities including climbing on natural rock; artificial wall climbing; and ice climbing.

A full copy of the study "Outdoor Recreation Participation in the United States" can be downloaded of the OIF website at [Outdoor Recreation Participation in the United States](#).

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**About the Climbing Wall Association, Inc. (CWA).** The CWA is a 501(c)(06), non-profit, trade association incorporated in May of 2003 for manufacturers of climbing wall equipment, builders of climbing walls, operators of climbing walls, and others involved in the climbing industry.

The CWA is the only trade association addressing the needs and interests of the climbing wall industry and climbing wall operators. The mission of the Climbing Wall Association is to support the growth, health and independence of the climbing wall industry, and to promote the sport of climbing.