

ADVENTURE PARK INSIDER

SUMMER 2022

Business is Building


Consumer demand has spurred a boom for park builders.

>> 44

The Staffing Struggle

Our data show this is not a new issue, but there are solutions.

>> 47



XCARET
CANCUN
COLOSSUS

>> 58

THE BEST RESCUE IS NO RESCUE

An explanation of possible preventative measures and rescue solutions.

By Steve Woods, Emma Bell, and the Vertex Training Team

It's always important to prepare and plan for foreseeable rescue situations. However, the best way to prepare for these situations is to prepare for no rescue at all. That is, thoughtful planning and energy put into managing our facilities and educating our staff can greatly reduce the need for rescues. Doing this work can also remove the need for complex rescues, which may involve methods and equipment beyond the day-to-day skills and expertise of your employees, and therefore increase the potential for errors and failures.

The training and practice of complex procedures exposes both trainers and staff to high levels of risk, yet these are procedures that some parks or challenge courses may never

need to perform. This training can itself become a risk. Vertex has trained thousands of people to carry out some form of rescue procedure, using a variety of different equipment and approaches as technology and ideas have evolved. We have not had any accidents that led to serious injury, but we have had some near misses and situations that, if they were not spotted and addressed quickly, could have been very serious.

So, while we need to plan for foreseeable rescues, we can reduce or remove the potential need for rescues through other means. If there is still a rescue need, we can often manage it within the skill set, equipment, and methods that your staff use every day. The following solutions can all contribute to reducing the need for and complexity of your rescues.

PPE, Equipment Solution


The PPE and at-height safety equipment available to a ropes course owner for customers and staff is vast and constantly evolving. Ask yourself and consider the following:

- Is there a solution to prevent or reduce the likelihood of a potential problem by selecting different, better, or less complicated PPE or equipment?
- Who is advising you, and are they competent to do so?

The options for PPE and equipment specifically designed for ropes courses is growing. Initially, the industry took its PPE and equipment from mountaineering, but there could now be better, tested, and jurisdiction-conforming options available to you. Great examples of this are how we have migrated from ropes and carabiners as the participant safety system to simple and well-designed ropes-course-specific smart- and continuous-belay products, such as the Kong ZaZa and LockD Clips. You can also now provide your instructors and inspectors with a device like the Petzl Grillon—an adjustable lanyard for work positioning—that allows them to lower themselves onto a belay line or rescue line should they need support getting down.

Briefing Solution


When participants are on the course, we rely on them to follow the rules and instructions that are communicated during pre-climb briefings, or ground school. If you regularly see



Left: Your choice of PPE and equipment should reduce, not add to, the complexity of your rescues.

Below: An effective briefing can prevent the need for rescues. If you are seeing issues on course, changes to the content or delivery of your briefing can help.






CLIMB. ZIP. JUMP.

WORLD'S FIRST CATCH-AND-HOLD AUTO BELAY

TRUBLUE iQ+ is the first and only auto belay in the world that can Catch-and-Hold a climber. TRUBLUE is no longer just a life-safety device. It's a climbing partner, allowing climbers to rest and keep climbing without starting over. Now everyone can feel what it's like to make it to the top. Visit www.trubluclimbing.com/iQ to upgrade your facility.



head rush
technologies

THE BEST RESCUE IS NO RESCUE

unexpected or unusual behavior, though, or if people often don't seem to follow or know the safety rules, then you may need to consider adjusting the content and delivery of your briefings in order to mitigate these issues.

It is critical that briefings are not just delivered to customers, but also understood and remembered by them. What you say, when you say it, and how you say it are vital to the success of the activity—and also to the prevention and reduction of potential rescue situations. So, think about:

- What is being said in the briefing?
- How is it being said?
- Are you giving enough information to support customers during their experience?
- Have they understood, or even been listening?
- Are there certain rules and instructions that customers consistently don't follow?

A thorough assessment of the content and delivery of your briefings can identify deficiencies. Improved training on how and what to say, or retraining of a newly developed briefing, will be needed to effectively solve any issues.

Supervision Solution

Watch for indicators that a participant may potentially get into a rescue situation. Know the signs to look for in a customer, such as: overconfidence, showing off, lack of confidence, poor balance/spatial awareness, or signs of medical distress or need. Be aware and listen throughout a ropes course session to pick up on these signals. Know the sections on your course that need closer supervision, and spots where customers typically need to be supported. All this can help you intervene before a rescue becomes necessary.

Your knowledge of the course and observations of guests and guides allow you to design a supervision plan for your course. Remove objects and/or trees from line of sight, and train staff in coaching customers through their rough moments. All of these things can reduce the need for a customer to be rescued.

In short: Staff should know what to look for, who to look out for, where to look, and how to coach customers through stressful moments.

Inspection Solution

Activities such as free falls and products such as the DropZone Powerfan and auto-belay devices have critical daily inspection criteria. When followed correctly, there will be, in theory, no need for a rescue solution. However, if these inspections are not carried



Inspections are key in reducing rescues.



zip^{STOP}

ZIP LINE BRAKE

SPEED



head rush
technologies

CLIMB. ZIP. JUMP.

THE BEST ZIP LINE BRAKE FOR YOUR COURSE

The best brake for your zip line, the zipSTOP Zip Line Brake family uses selfregulating eddy current magnetic braking technology to brake zip line riders smoothly, comfortably, and consistently at high arrival speeds. Our zipSTOP brakes are the brake of choice for some of the highest profile, highest throughput zip lines in the world! Learn more about zipSTOP at www.headrushtech.com.

head rush
technologies

THE BEST RESCUE IS NO RESCUE

out properly or if a jam or other irregularity is missed, it can lead to a rescue situation.

It is critical to the safety of staff and customers to understand your ropes course and all the specific activities, components, and other equipment—and, of course, their inspection criteria. Review and ask yourself the following:

- When are the course components and equipment checked?
- Who checks them, and are they competent to do so?
- Can inspectors get to the part of the course and equipment that needs inspecting using an acceptable, safe method?
- What are they looking for?
- Do they know the pass/fail criteria? Can they determine when service is necessary?
- Does it have a need for professional servicing?
- When was the last inspection completed?

Design Solution

One of the best ways to reduce or even remove the need for both staff and customers to be rescued is through smart course design. If you keep good records of where you have had to lower people from, then you can often diagnose if there is a “hot spot” and may wish to alter the design here to keep the flow of the course and reduce the need for rescues. Among the design considerations:

- Can we make the rescue locations easier to use?
- Can we provide alternate activity options so that challenging sections can be bypassed?
- Can we design better access and egress points for staff and customers where needed?
- If staff need to get to certain parts of the course for daily inspections, what has been designed and put in place to make these sections accessible? Proper design of access points can remove or reduce the need for complex rescues.



Keep records of rescues to diagnose “hot spots,” and consider altering your course design to mitigate them.

Think about such design touches as adding extra staples or hand holds, making platforms bigger, providing ropes that customers can use to pull themselves back to a platform, ladders or net tubes that can be used as access and egress points for staff or customers, fixings for access methods to get to Powerfan or zip brakes that need close inspection each day, and moving a belay anchor point to a better position.

Much can be done through good course design retrospectively after a course has been built and in use for a period, not just at the planning stage of a ropes course. Some issues reveal themselves only after many people have been on the course. >>



CLIMB. ZIP. JUMP.

FREE FALL FOR ALL

The QuickFlight® Free Fall Device creates a fun and exciting free fall experience for any age. Whether creating a standalone, eye-catching thrill or adding an unforgettable adventure course exit, QuickFlight is easily installed onto your existing tower, bridge, or ledge. QuickFlight brings free fall to all! Learn more about QuickFlight at: www.headrushtech.com.

head rush
technologies

THE BEST RESCUE IS NO RESCUE

Daily Skill-Set Rescue Solution

After considering all of these solutions, there may still exist the potential for a foreseeable need to rescue staff or customers on your course. If so, then the first option for a rescue method should be one that uses the skills and equipment your staff use every day in their job. Ensure that this equipment is designed for the way you will use it and the loads you will put on it.

On an assisted belay ropes course, for example, the top-roping system used by the instructors with customers every day can also be the method for assisting or rescuing a stuck person. There is very likely to be, on a lot of team activities, another belay system that could be transferred onto or be used to belay up somebody to help.

Another situation is a staff member could be stuck high on a belay wire during an inspection. This can be solved with two other staff members and a belay system. One accesses the stuck person while the other gets ready to perform the belay and lower from the ground. There may be a belay system already installed, or they can create a temporary one close to the stuck person. The rescuer who has accessed can then connect the stuck person to the belay system and the person on the ground can lower him or her down.

Assess your whole course, and ask yourself, "Where can a belay system be used that is already installed, and where is it possible to create a temporary one for a rescue?" You may find this becomes the only rescue procedure you need to train, practice, and prepare for.

Special Rescue Solution

Despite attending to all of the above, you may still be left with some foreseeable situations that none of these solutions will prevent or solve. In these cases, a rescue solution may require specialist devices and/or complex methods and techniques. These could include accessing skills, ascending skills, lifting skills, and lowering skills. Carefully consider your choice of equipment and methods to ensure that your solution is as practical and effective as possible. The easier it is to train for and use, the better your chances of executing a successful rescue, no matter how rarely you have to perform one. ■



Hopefully, rescues are rare, but proper planning and equipment can help them be successful.