

Accident / Incident Management

There is always risk of an accident occurring, which might result in an injury. When an accident occurs:

1. Determine if there is an injury
2. Attend to the injured party
3. Complete an accident report if medical attention is required
4. Follow up with the injured party the next day

Determine if there is an Injury

Always err on the side of over treatment. You will have to use your judgment in determining whether an injury is serious enough to warrant calling in professional medical assistance. An individual may be in shock and may state, "I am fine". It is prudent to keep the person in a prone position until you can assess the cause of the incident and the possible trauma that may have occurred. Ask the individual simple questions like their name, the date, are they climbing with friends and use this information to judge their state of awareness. Ask any witnesses what happened to help assess the risk of injury. Ask the patient if they feel any pain and where they are feeling the pain. Only when you are convinced that there has not been any significant injury should you allow them to stand up. When an injury occurs:

Attend to the Injured Party

- a. Protect the victim by stopping all activity in the immediate area and make certain there is no risk of further injury due to falling climbers, etc.
- b. Keep the victim in a position best suited to the injury, if there is a possibility of a head/neck injury do not move the victim (unless the area is unsafe)
- c. Do not leave the victim alone
- d. Enlist the help of bystanders
- e. Use good judgment in assessing the injury, if there is a medical professional in the area ask for their assistance

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- f. If it is likely that the injury may require treatment by a trained medical professional (i.e. broken bone, a laceration, concussion, etc.), immediately contact 911 and or other emergency numbers provided for your location
- g. Remain in charge until medical help arrives, or the injured person can take care of him/herself, or is placed in the care of a responsible third party (i.e. parent, guardian, friend, etc.).
- h. If there is a question concerning the seriousness of an injury, contact 911 immediately in order to assist the individual

Once the injured party is under the care of medical professionals or has been stabilized and determined to be capable of leaving the facility under their own power, an Accident Report must be completed. An Accident Report is required for:

- a. Any injury that required medical attention
- b. Any incident for which future medical attention may be needed
- c. An accident report is not required for an injury such as a scraped knee or elbow that only requires a Band-Aid

Completing an Accident Report

- a. Print legibly and complete the report in its entirety. This document may be critical in protecting Climb Well from legal liability in the event of a lawsuit. If you make additional notes, attach those to the Accident Report.
- b. Obtain as much information from witnesses as possible. The information you obtain from the injured party may be limited by their condition. Do not press the injured party for information if they are in pain and in need of medical attention
- c. **Collect all paperwork from the accident**, including a copy of the Participant Agreement and the Accident Report for review by your facility manager. The manager will follow up with the staff on duty at the time of the accident to review the facts of the incident and record any additional information about the incident. Notify your manager of the incident once you have completed the report.

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- d. The manager will forward a copy of the Accident Report and Participant Agreement to the liability insurance underwriter.

Follow up with the Injured Party

The facility manager should follow up with the injured party by telephone after the accident, preferably within a day of the accident. Studies have shown that personal contact with an injured party significantly impacts the perception of responsibility for the accident. The contact should be made for purposes of finding out the injured person's condition, not about establishing cause or blame. If you are the staff person who completed the Accident Report it is your responsibility to make certain the facility manager receives all information regarding the accident/incident and that someone is designated to contact the injured party after the accident.

DO NOT ADMIT FAULT OR BLAME WITH THE INJURED PERSON AT ANY TIME DURING YOUR INTERACTIONS AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT OR IN YOUR FOLLOW UP CONTACTS. Be empathetic and feel free to express that you are sorry that they were injured but do not discuss fault for the accident.

Coaching

*Risk management is a critical part of your Operations Manual. The tone you set with your employees will be key to how safety is managed in your facility. This process starts with how your employees and you communicate with customers. I have seen a number of website, print ads and other promotional communications that contain the word "safe". "We are the safest gym in the area", "this is the safest way for your kids to spend a weekend evening", "yes, climbing in the gym is safe." These claims/uses of the word "safe" are invitations to Plaintiff's attorneys to file lawsuits on behalf of people who are injured in your facility. If you want to minimize the opportunity for frivolous lawsuits you can start by giving employees consistent coaching on your safety practices and how to communicate with customers. **CLIMBING IS NOT SAFE!!** **COMMUNICATE THIS TO ALL STAFF MEMBERS.***