

RECREATION MANAGEMENT

THE MAGAZINE WITH IDEAS & SOLUTIONS FOR RECREATION, SPORTS & FITNESS FACILITIES MANAGERS

Choosing an Auto-Belay

If your facility has a climbing wall, or if you are considering adding one, then you need to do what you can to maximize its use—as well as the revenue you earn. One way to do this is with an auto belay system.

Top-rope climbing typically involves two people—a climber and a belayer. But with an auto belay system, you don't need a human belayer. Multiple people will be able to climb, with one person supervising from the ground.

Q: Why should we consider an auto belay system?

A: An auto belay system will allow you to increase revenue as more climbers can ascend the wall. At the same time, you will reduce both your cost and the risks.

You'll attract single climbers, as well as reduce barriers to entry for first-timers. Climbers won't need to rely on having a partner every time they visit you, so they'll be able to come when their schedule allows. In addition, auto belays eliminate the need for belayer training and testing, which means new participants can just clip in and get started.

You'll be able to host more classes, parties, clinic and other programs on your wall, without drastically increasing your staff costs. You simply need to move your auto belay devices to the areas where they are most needed. Fewer staffers will be needed to belay or supervise climbers.

Experienced climbers and newbies alike will thank you for increasing the intensity of their workout as well. In the traditional two-person system, one person must wait while their partner climbs. With an auto belay in place, everyone gets an intense workout, without having to wait their turn.

Q: How can an auto belay system reduce our risk?

A: The biggest risk in a climbing facility is falling due to human belayer error. An auto belay device will remove that factor from the equation, reducing your risk.

Q: What else should we look for?

A: Talk to your manufacturer. The key is to find an auto belay that meets safety standards for fall arrest devices and has undergone extensive safety testing. You want to find a system that is reliable, accommodates a wide range of climber weights and has no sacrificial wearing parts.

Look for a product that is easy to install and move around. This will make it easier for you to change the position to accommodate different programming needs.

Finally, ask about maintenance requirements. You will occasionally need to replace webbing, but you should be able to find something with low maintenance requirements and costs.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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