

Special Activity Release/Indemnification of All Claims  
for  
Lead Climbing on Rock or Ice/Alpine Terrain

In addition to the usual risks and hazards associated with all outdoor activities and with top-rope rock and ice climbing in general, we are writing to alert you to certain special challenges and risks. This is not intended to be an exclusive or exhaustive list of trauma, injuries or accidents that may occur, and we do not want to heighten or reduce your or your child's enthusiasm for the experience. However, we do want you to know in advance what you might expect and we want you to be informed of some of the possible risks.

**Lead Rock Climbing:**

In lead climbing, one climber begins up a climbing route while being belayed by his/her partner. Both partners start from the ground or a ledge. The person leading the climb places his/her own equipment into the rock or clips his/her rope into pre-existing equipment. The lead climber is not belayed with a rope from above. When a student undertakes lead climbing with The White Mountain School, an instructor may be near the lead climber, but that individual will usually be on the ground and not supervising the lead climber from above. Because the lead climber is not belayed from above, if the lead climber should fall, it will be a greater distance in a lead climbing situation. When a climber is belayed with a rope that is anchored from above, any "fall" is more like a slip and usually only a few inches to a foot. However, in a lead climbing situation, if the person leading the climb were to fall, he/she would fall double the distance (plus the stretch of the rope) he/she is above the last piece of equipment he/she has clipped (the distance above the last piece of protection plus the same distance below it until the rope catches their fall). So, for example, if the lead climber is five feet above his/her last piece of protection, h/she would fall ten feet plus the stretch of the rope (6-8% of the total amount of rope between the person leading the climb and the belayer). Because the potential length of a fall while lead climbing is greater, the risk of serious injury due to trauma is also greater. Traumatic injuries could include but are not limited to: musculoskeletal injuries such as sprains, dislocations and fractures of joints, long bones and vertebrae; head injuries ranging from mild concussion to serious brain injuries; soft tissue injuries that include cuts and scrapes, abrasions, lacerations, contusions and punctures; rope burns; paralysis from back injuries associated from fractured vertebrae; and even death from conditions secondary to the trauma of a fall. It is also possible that some participants could suffer mental anguish from trauma from the experience or their injuries.

**Lead Ice/Alpine Climbing:**

Although a person leading an ice/alpine climb would place protection into the ice or rock in a similar way to a rock climber, there are some distinct differences. The first difference is the ever changing nature of the medium being climbed. Ice by its very nature, although can be strong, is unstable and breaks or cracks when climbed. Pieces of ice from the size of marbles to the size of small refrigerators can be knocked off or cut loose by the lead climber at any time. In fact, less proficient ice climbers tend knock off more ice than those more proficient at ice climbing. This creates a hazard that usually does not exist in rock climbing. The person climbing second must always be aware of this hazard and the climbing team must evaluate and choose belay stances that minimize this risk to the second climber. Any injury to the second climber is a hazard the lead climber and must be dealt with by the leader. Injuries from falling ice can cause serious contusions and other soft tissue injuries. Additionally, falling ice can cause head injuries

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

and broken bones and other forms of trauma some, potentially leading to death. In popular areas, the origin of falling ice may not be limited to the ones own rope-team. It may also originate from other climbers that are above and may even be out of view. Because ice is a constantly changing medium (routes can and do change from one day to the next), the difficulty of the route also changes. A route may be in great condition one day and due to changing weather conditions, be completely out of condition the next day. Due to fluctuations in temperature ice has different density and strength. This affects how a person may climb it and place protection in it. Unlike on rock, on ice, protection is usually (a climber may also tie off an ice cycle that is frozen at both ends but hollow at the center or other forms of rock climbing protection where the rock is exposed) a tubular screw that is twisted into the ice. These screws are approximately one inch in diameter and from four to 9 inches long. The longer the screw and the stronger the ice, the more the force the screw can hold. This may seem obvious, but being able to evaluate the quality of the ice and the ability of the ice screw to hold a fall, takes practice. Another difference between rock and ice climbing is the distance between protection placements. Due to many factors including the cold and the need to move quickly and efficiently, ice climbing protection is usually placed less frequently than rock climbing protection. This greatly increases the length of any potential fall. Finally, the approach to some routes or, the routes themselves may be in avalanche terrain. Some of the areas may have avalanche forecasts posted, others may not. In either case, this would require the ability to evaluate the stability of the snow pack and the potential for avalanche. Ice and alpine climbing, although seemingly the next logical step from rock climbing, requires many specialized techniques. There are many factors and conditions to be constantly evaluating and require the climber's constant attention. Due to all of these factors it is a very high risk activity.

#### **Risks Common to Both Activities:**

The rope of a falling leader could be cut as it passes over a sharp edge and the leader could fall all the way to the ground. The rope could accidentally unclip from equipment placed in the rock. Protection equipment improperly placed by the leader could fall out, be accidentally pulled out by the rope, or be placed in poor quality rock (rendering failure of the equipment) or in a manner not consistent with its intended use. Any one of these conditions could result in a longer fall.

Some additional risks that students must now monitor for themselves include routine but critical things like checking that their own and their partner's harnesses are properly buckled, their tie-in knots are properly tied, all locking carabineer's are indeed locked, and all belay anchors are properly constructed. Other objective hazards include but are not limited to rock/ice fall; equipment or other things dropped or knocked off from people, animals or the wind above them; loose/poor quality rock; inclement weather and hazards from animals including bees, hornets or wasps. Some climbing areas may not have a well worn trail to them and require navigational skills to approach or descend. There is always the possibility of moving slower than expected and be forced to spend an unexpected night out.

Other conditions may also increase the risk to the climbers. As the lead climber moves up the route, his/her rope could get stuck. This could require advanced thinking and climbing techniques to extricate oneself from the situation. If the person climbing second is not able to climb the route, the lead climber may have to know specialized techniques to provide assistance.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

**Notice:** This is a legally binding agreement. By signing this agreement you give up your right to bring a court action to recover compensation or obtain any other remedy for any injury or death to yourself, your child or your property, however caused, arising out of participation in school sports/activities now or any time in the future.

*If you do not understand the nature or potential for risk in any paragraph above, you should speak with The Director of the Wilderness Skills Program.*

**Acknowledgement of Risk** I hereby acknowledge and agree that the activities noted above, as well as other school-related activities, have inherent risks. I acknowledge that I/my child am/is responsible for my/his/her own safety in these activities. We, the undersigned parent(s)/guardian(s) and student participant agree that the school may set specific conditions on my participation in these activities which include, but are not limited to, limitations based upon scheduling, academic, social, behavioral or safety concerns. We agree to abide by the conditions established by the school.

I further acknowledge that the above listing of risks is provided as an aid to help me/us understand the types of potential risks but that this document does not state all possible risks associated with wilderness or team sports or activities, and that the list in no way limits the reach of this release and indemnification agreement.

**Release/Indemnification** In consideration if my/my child's participation in any of the aforementioned activities, I/we the undersigned agree to release and on behalf of myself, my child, my/my child's heirs, representatives, executors, administrators and assigns **HEREBY DO RELEASE** The White Mountain School, its officers, agents and employees from any cause of action, claims or demands of any nature whatsoever, including but not limited to a claim of negligence, which I/my child, my/my child's heirs, representatives executors, administrators and assigns may now have, or have in the future against The White Mountain School on account of personal injury, property damage, death, illness or accident of any kind arising out of or in any way related to my/my child's participation in the above or other school-related activities, howsoever the injury or damage is caused, including but not limited to the negligence of The White Mountain School.

In consideration of my/my child's participation in any of the above or other school-related activities, we, the undersigned, agree to **INDEMNIFY AND HOLD HARMLESS** The White Mountain School, its officers, agents and employees from and all causes of action, claims, demands, losses of costs of any nature whatsoever arising out of or in any way relating to participation in these activities.

I/we hereby certify that I/we have read, understood and considered the nature and extent of the risks inherent in these activities and that the participant is voluntarily assuming the risks. I/we understand that I/my child will be solely responsible for any loss or damage, including death, sustained while participating in these activities and that by this agreement I/my child am/is relieving The White Mountain School of any and all liability, whether due to the School's negligence or otherwise, for such loss damage or death.

I further certify that I/my child is in good health and that my child has no physical or other limitations which would preclude safe participation in the above and other school-related activities.

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand that the terms of this agreement are legally binding and I certify that, after having carefully read it, I am signing this of my own free will. I fully understand that this means that neither The White Mountain School nor any of its faculty, employees, or agents shall be liable for any injury, loss or damage occasioned as a result of my/my child's participation in wilderness or team sports, or other school activities.**

**Dated:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's signature**  
*Participant's signature is required.*

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Legal Guardian Signature**      **Date**  
*Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) signature(s) is also required for any participant under the age of 18.*

Initials \_\_\_\_\_