



ZIP LINE FACILITATOR MANUAL

Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama

Updated: July 2023

This certification is intended for GSSA registered and approved adult members who wish to facilitate zip line activities only at Scoutshire Woods or Kamp Kiwanis.

Contains:

- Facilitators Skills Checklist
- The 3 E's
- The Zip Line Program
- The 4 H's
- Zip Line Emergency Action Plan
- Emergency phone numbers for both camps
- Accident Report
- Zip Line Equipment and Use Log
- Zip Line Facilitator Training Documentation

For any questions, please contact customer care at 800-239-6636 or email customercare@girlscoutssa.org

FACILITATORS SKILLS CHECKLIST

After completing the Zip Line Facilitator Training, you should know and be able to demonstrate the following:

- ☐ The understanding of “Challenge by Choice” theme applied to the zip line
- ☐ How to involve the girls in the zip line safety activities: harness buddy check, rope tow, and commands
- ☐ How to inspect zip line equipment: trolley, carabiners, webbing, cable, ladder, platform, brake and landing
- ☐ How to inspect, adjust, and fit a helmet properly
- ☐ How to inspect, put on, and adjust harnesses properly
- ☐ How to zip a participant off the zip line platform
- ☐ How to assist a participant with the dismount ladder/dismount area
- ☐ Know basic commands and rescue procedures
- ☐ How to complete the log book page
- ☐ Know the roles and safety measures used for both the platform and dismount facilitator

The zip line structures, cables, equipment and gear are to be used solely for the specific activity of zipping down the cable. Any other use is prohibited.

Two trained facilitators must be present to operate the zip line: one at the platform and one at the dismount.

The facilitator at the platform must be wearing a helmet, harness, and be attached by tether to the equipment to prevent the facilitator from receiving an injury in falling off the platform.

The facilitator at the dismount must be wearing a helmet to prevent the facilitator from receiving an injury when receiving a participant at the dismount.

Make certain the equipment and use logs are completed correctly.

Check the 3 E's: before you bring the group to use the zip line, check the "3 E's" to ensure safety

Element: inspect the zip line from top to bottom. Make sure all parts of the element are installed properly and according to the manufacturer's specifications. Never zip if there is anything wrong with an Element.

Inspect	What to look for
Cable	Fraying strands, obstructions on cable, how taut the cable is
Brake	Secured to another tree
Trolley	Wheels are clear, no rusting or scoring
Platform	Secure and stable, check for wasp nests

Environment: inspect the surrounding trees, the ground and the weather. After you hear thunder you must **wait 30 minutes** without hearing thunder or seeing lightning before you are able to proceed with the zip line. Zipping in light rain is acceptable.

Inspect	What to look for
Trees used or utility poles	Tree's health, any storm damage
Adjacent trees	Any nearby branches that may be in the way, storm damage
Ground below	Especially at dismount area: ant hills, stumps, holes, etc.
Weather	Severe weather, thunder, lightning (must delay 30 min.)
Obstructions	People or objects in the path of the zip line or landing area

Equipment: Inspect the safety equipment and do not allow it to be used.

Inspect	What to look for
Harnesses	Cuts, broken stitching, excessive wear, malfunction
Carabiners	Check for excessive wear (scoring of metal), ensure that it can close and lock completely
Tether/Webbing	Cuts, broken, stitching, excessive wear, malfunction
Helmets	Cuts, broken stitching, excessive wear, malfunction
Step Ladder	Malfunction

If any equipment is defective or damaged, please remove it from the rest of the equipment. Report the defective equipment to the camp ranger.

ZIP LINE PROGRAM

PARTICIPANT RATIO:

There must be two trained facilitators at each zip line: one at the platform and one at the dismount. Only two participants are allowed on the platform at a time: one on the platform and one waiting on the steps. Two participants can be safety helpers at the dismount area. This effectively makes the facilitator-to-participant ratio **2 facilitators to 4 girls**. As for the other girls waiting to use the zip line, they **must be supervised** by following the standard adult-to-girl ratios stated in the Safety Activity Checkpoints.

CHALLENGE BY CHOICE:

Ensure that the participants understand that they can choose not to ride the zip line.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Properly introduce the group to the zip line in a structured manner.

The facilitator's tone of safety and structure will be reflected to the girls.

- Circle the girls around the tarp with the helmets, harnesses and webbing
- Explain "Challenge by Choice"
- Talk about securing loose clothing, removing items from pockets, and **tying back long hair into a low ponytail**.
- Ensure that high hairstyles (braids or ponytails) are removed when possible so as not to interfere with helmet fitting.
- Explain the zip line helper roles: girls can participate as a dismount ladder helper and as a trolley retriever.
- Go over zip line commands and ensure that the girls know what to say, who says it and when to say it. There must be an answer to everything the platform facilitator says.
 - "Line clear?" – platform
 - "Line clear" – dismount
 - "Zipping?" – platform
 - "Zip on" – dismount
- Hold up and demonstrate how to properly put on a harness.
 - Make sure the straps are not twisted or too loose.
 - Understand the different types of harnesses available.
- Put on the harnesses. In order to include the girls in the safety procedures, pair them up so that they can check their buddy's harness. The harnesses must be checked again by the platform facilitator.
 - Make sure that the different types of harnesses are properly fitted.
- Put on and adjust the helmets using the buddy's help.
- Explain the "Four H's" to the girls in order to include them in the safety structure.
 - Helmet
 - Harness
 - Hardware
 - Human
- Maintain a "waiting zone" where the girls wait for their turn. They may not leave that zone for any reason. Girls who are waiting will need to be supervised and lead in playing games or singing songs to pass their wait time.
- No more than one participant should be on the platform at a time and the next participant may be waiting on the steps.

Things We've Learned Over the Years

- **People of different sizes go at different speeds and levels on the lines.** That means that the facilitators need to be aware at all times.
- **The line stretches after extended use.** Towards the end of the day, the zip line may have stretched and this is normal. It is up to the facilitator to determine if the line has become too low for the weight levels of some participants.
- **Move the dismount ladder or platform out from under the line.** The dismount must be completely clear of everything when in use. Never leave the ladder or platform in the way. *Move it every time!!!!*
- **Part of the braking system is the participant slowing herself down by putting their feet to the ground.** The zip lines at Scoutshire Woods and Kamp Kiwanis have an “automatic brake” (bungee block) and participants are to initiate and perform “active braking” by striding, stepping or dragging their feet along the ground to help slow themselves.
- **Do not try to catch the participant as she approaches the dismount.** The dismount facilitator is to let the participant zip past, let the trolley zip into the brake and initiate active braking with their feet. Then, the facilitator can get behind to help the participant get their footing. If facilitators try to catch participants at full speed, they could injure themselves.
- **If you are uncomfortable with anything, you should shut down the zip line.** If you are concerned with weather, equipment, the element, the girl's attitude, your fellow facilitator's ability, or if you just have a bad feeling – shut down the line. Your first concern is safety.

WHAT IF?

- **What if the girl lets go of the tether/webbing?** There is a possibility that they may flip over and zip upside down if they let go of the tether/webbing. If the harness is not above their hips and is too loose, the participant could slip out.
 - *Always check harnesses. Before they zip – tell participants, “DO NOT let go!!!!!!”*
- **What if the person bounces or swings on the way down?** They may be one of the unfortunate ones that has long enough limbs to bounce to the ground or swing out and hit the nearest tree. **Before they zip – tell participants, “DO NOT bounce, or swing arms or legs.”**

Most participants are tall enough to help slow themselves by striding, stepping or dragging their feet along the ground when they reach the landing.

The Four H's

Each rider **MUST** be checked **EVERYTIME** immediately before being sent off the platform.

Helmet: The helmet must be snug and not loose. Have the girl shake her head to check the looseness of the helmet.

Harness: The harness must be **TIGHT** and **ABOVE THE HIP BONE**. Tug and pull on the harness and check the buckles.

Hardware: Ensure that the harness is secured to the zip line by looping the carabiner through the loop of the harness and one loop of the tether, connected to the trolley. Make sure carabiners are latched closed and properly tightened. Tug and pull on the tether/webbing to ensure it is secure.

Human: Put your hand on the participant's shoulder or back and ask if they are ready and willing. Remind them this a "Challenge by Choice."

- Tell them what to expect
- Tell them to hold onto the tether/webbing and **"DO NOT let go!!!!!!"**
- Tell them not to bounce or swing while zip lining and to keep legs tucked in until over the landing
- Most participants are tall enough to help **slow themselves by striding or stepping along the ground when they reach the landing.**

ZIP LINE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

- First responding facilitator recognizes emergency and activates the EAP by communicating to the other facilitator, that there is an emergency.
- First responding facilitator **surveys the scene**, making sure that it is safe to respond to the emergency and provide care. Surveying the scene also informs the rescuer of the nature of the emergency and how best to begin and follow through with the rescue.
- The second facilitator is in charge of calling emergency services or directing someone to specifically do so.
- The second facilitator removes other participants from the scene.

SURVEY THE SCENE

- **Location of distressed participant (victim):**
 - Is the victim attached to the line at either the platform or dismount? Is the victim stranded in between the platform and dismount? Is the victim not attached to the line at all?
- **Platform:** Is the platform safe and sturdy?
- **Trees/Limbs:** Is there a danger from storm damage such as hanging limbs/branches or dangerous trees?
- **Cable:** Is the cable frayed or stressed in any way? Is the connection to the tree sturdy and secure?
- **Equipment:** Has the condition of the equipment become dangerous?
- **Harness:** How is the victim seated in the harness? Will you need to make adjustments to the harness before you are able to rescue the victim?
- **Environmental Conditions:** Is the weather severe? Are there any hazards such as holes, stumps, puddles, etc., that may affect how you rescue the victim?

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

If the facilitators have a camera or camera phone, it is strongly encouraged that they take photos of the injury/accident, equipment, and accident site.

POSSIBLE ZIP LINE INJURIES

- Falls: off platform, out of harness, off ladder
- Hair or clothing caught in trolley
- Pinched, jammed fingers
- Cuts, abrasions, rope burns
- Joint dislocation
- Equipment failure resulting in collision
- Miscommunication resulting in collision
- Sprains and strains

WEATHER EVACUATION

- Follow the severe weather evacuation plan specific to the applicable property: either Kamp Kiwanis or Camp Scoutshire Woods.
- DO NOT zip line if you hear thunder or see lightning.

Zip Line Emergency Phone Numbers

Emergency Medical Services – 911

Kamp Kiwanis

Kowaliga Volunteer Fire Department – (334) 857-3648

Eclectic Police Department – (334) 541-2148

Elmore County Sherriff's Department – (334) 567-5546

Kamp Kiwanis

Physical Address of Kamp Kiwanis:

2365 Camp Kiwanis Road

Eclectic, AL 36024

Ranger – (334) 239-5160

Camp Scoutshire Woods

Physical address of Scoutshire Woods

6051 Camp Scoutshire Road N

Citronelle, AL 36522

Ranger - (251) 937-1326

Council Service Centers

800-239-6636

Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama

2501 Bell Road

Montgomery, AL 36117

(334) 272-9164

or

3483 Springhill Ave

Mobile, AL 36608

(251) 344-3330

ZIP LINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES Updated: 2023

The purpose of the zip line is to increase physical confidence, cooperation, and to help girls push beyond their perceived physical limits.

ZIP LINE GUIDELINES

- Use of Zip Lines requires that:
 - Zip lines are reserved in advance.
 - Two trained facilitators are present and have been verified by the council
 - All mandatory equipment is present on site
 - Zip Line use is logged on the “Zip Line Equipment and Use Log”
- After use:
 - All equipment must be put away, line must be locked, and any notes on equipment maintenance must be entered on the Zip Line Equipment and Use Log.

WHO CAN USE THE ZIP LINES

- **Registered Girl Scouts** with an **Annual Permission Form on file**
- **Registered and Approved Adults** with an **Annual Permission Form on file**
- **Weight limit** of **225 lbs** per participant
- **7-UP only** - *Due to recommendations from the equipment manufacturers and our insurance, children ages 6 and younger are **prohibited** from using the zip lines.*

TROOP RESPONSIBILITY (Safety Activity Checkpoints)

- All troops must follow the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints, including:
 - Follow proper adult-to-girl ratios depending on ages and group size
 - Verify that your facilitators are trained
 - Verify your itinerary and your girl/guardian emergency contacts
 - Prepare for emergencies (adult trained in First Aid, have first aid kit)
- What to Wear
 - Closed toe shoes
 - Close fitted clothing (avoid wearing loose clothing, especially around the head and neck)
 - Remove jewelry and watches
 - Empty pockets
 - No scarves, necklaces, or bandanas around neck, no bows in hair
 - Hair must be pulled back and secured under the helmet with no chance that it will be near the pulley system.
 - Troops are responsible for making sure ponytail holders are available for long hair

FACILITATOR POLICIES

- Two trained facilitators must be present to operate the zip line: one at the platform and one at the dismount. The primary facilitator at the platform must be an adult (at least 19 years old).

FACILITATOR TRAINING

- All zip line training participants must be at least 16 years old to attend training
- Primary facilitators must be registered and approved adult members of GSSA, a council staff member, a camp staff member or approved specifically by the GSSA Volunteer Training Mgr.
- Must pass a training class offered by the council, using the Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama **Zip Line Facilitator Manual**
- Must know and be able to demonstrate the following:
 - the three E's
 - the four H's
 - understand "Challenge by Choice" as applied to the zip line program
 - involve the girls in zip line safety activities: harness buddy check, rope tow and commands
 - inspect zip line elements & equipment: cable, brake, trolley, platform, harness, carabiner, tether/webbing, helmet, step ladder, trees, adjacent trees, ground below, obstructions and weather
 - inspect, fit and adjust a helmet properly
 - inspect, put on and adjust a harness properly
 - zip a participant off the zip line platform
 - take participant off at the dismount ladder/area
 - the roles of the platform facilitator and the dismount facilitator
 - the basic commands
 - completing the log book
- *This training is only valid for Girl Scouts of Southern Alabama zip line facilities and is not to be used in operating any other facilities.*
- Once trained, the facilitators will be cleared to operate zip lines for up to 3 years at each zip line facility if she or he:
 - Has had **no recorded complaints** against her/his facilitating skills
 - Is currently a registered and approved volunteer with GSSA and has an Annual Permission form on file with GSSA
 - Fills out the log sheet properly
- Facilitators who wish to renew the 3-year certification must contact the Council to take the Zip Line Refresher Course and attend a Zip Line Skills demonstration at camp.
- The updated "Zip Line Facilitator Manual and Policies & Procedures" is available on the website
- *GSSA reserves the right to deny a previously trained facilitator from working the zip line.*

FACILITY POLICIES

- The zip line facilities at each of the council's camp properties shall be installed according to manufacturer's instructions and specifications.
- Each individual zip line is installed low to the ground, with the rider's feet being no more than 6 feet above the ground.
- The platform entrance will be blocked when not in use
- The facilities will be inspected before and after each use by facilitators and the camp ranger
- The facilities will be inspected by an experienced challenge course expert every year using the "Zip Line Yearly Inspection Verification" form.

EQUIPMENT POLICIES

- Harnesses, carabiners, tether/webbing, helmets, trolleys and ropes will be stored securely in a locked area when not in use
- Equipment will be inventoried every year and the record will be stored with equipment
- Equipment will be inspected before and after each use by facilitators and the camp ranger
- The "Zip Line Equipment and Use Log" will be completed after each use, listing the date, the equipment was used and the condition of the equipment
- A step ladder will be kept with the equipment

GSSA Zip Line Certification is a **two-part**, blended-learning course. You must finish Part 1 before you sign up for Part 2.

Part 1: Manual and Knowledge Check

Read through the Zip Line Manual and then click on this link to take the [Zip Line Knowledge Check](#)

Part 2: Skills Testing

At the Skills Test Session, you will learn and demonstrate proper zip line facilitation skills. You are required to maintain zip line proficiency and competency throughout your 3-year certification period.