As a follow up to the ACCT announcement released on July 18, 2018, the following information relates to the current ASTM International F24 Committee ballot. This ballot closes on August 13, 2018. Voting members of ASTM are encouraged to consider the impact of this change when casting their vote.

ASTM F24 Committee has a ballot that is proposing to change the scope of ASTM F2959-16 Standard Practice for Aerial Adventure Courses. The ballot is recommending removing the exclusions which currently apply to courses that operate exclusively under the following applications:

1.3.1.1 Educational curriculum.
1.3.1.2 Physical fitness purposes.
1.3.1.3 Organized competitive events.
1.3.1.4 Therapeutic programs.
1.3.1.5 Training purposes.
1.3.1.6 Team and confidence building.

To provide guidance and perspective on this ballot topic, we ask that you consider the following examples. Sport climbing will debut during the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. While a portable climbing wall mounted on a trailer that uses a hydraulic safety system and travels as part of a carnival is clearly an amusement device, the athletes in Tokyo will be participating in an organized competition. The climbing wall they compete on is not an amusement device - it is a sports facility that is hosting an organized competitive event. Similarly, students learning to tie knots and belay at a climbing wall in their school’s gymnasium during mandatory physical education classes are not primarily there for amusement or entertainment.

Should the ballot pass, aerial adventure courses in many jurisdictions could find themselves subject to amusement ride regulations (including fees, inspections, and other requirements) with no consideration for the intended function of their course and its operating system, or the long-standing equivalent level of safety provided by alternate standards such as ANSI/ACCT 03-2016.

The rationale provided in the ballot is that this change in scope will:

1. Enhance public safety
2. Make the F2959 standard comparable to other standards that do not list exclusions (including ANSI/ACCT Standards)
3. Reduce a rising injury rate for zip lines
The first point within the rationale provided states that ASTM F2959 has a goal of improving public safety. That goal is laudable and is to be supported. Their proposed approach of removing the exclusions classifying all aerial adventure courses as amusement devices will not accomplish this goal. In their own words, Aerial Adventure Courses should be classified on the basis of their “unique functional, operational and patron participation requirements when compared to amusement rides and devices” (see 2959-16 section 4.1) Clarity within the standard’s content and terminology is needed to support safer practices and will not be enhanced by removing the current exclusions.

According to the second rationale point provided on the ballot, removing the exclusions would make the F2959 standard similar to other industry standards currently in use. The ballot references the Professional Rope Course Association (PRCA) and the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) standards, which do not identify exclusions and can be applied to courses operating for “concession or commercial recreation use”. This rationale fails to recognize that within other ASTM F24 standards, there are often exemptions listed within a scope. For example, in F2291-17 (Standard Practice for Design of Amusement Rides and Devices) the exclusions include:

1.2.1 Patron directed amusement rides or devices (for example, go karts, bumper cars, bumper boats),
1.2.2 Artificial climbing walls,
1.2.3 Air-supported structures,
1.2.4 dry slides, and
1.2.5 coin operated rides.

Exclusions within the scope of standards provide users with clarity because they delineate what the standard applies to.

In the third point of their rationale, the ASTM F2959 ballot cites the conclusion from an article about zip line injuries published in the American Journal of Emergency Medicine in 2015 which concludes that:

The rapid increase in zipline-related injuries in recent years suggests the need for additional safety guidelines and regulations. Commercial ziplines AND publicly accessible non-commercial ziplines should be subject to uniform safety standards in all states and jurisdictions across the US, and homemade ziplines should not be used (p. 1748).

The data presented in the article and the research methodology does not support this conclusion for the following reasons:

1. There was no analysis provided on the number of injuries compared to number of participants. Therefore it is impossible to determine whether the increase is due to an increase in the popularity and availability of zip lines, or some other factor like enhanced reporting techniques.

2. Data from commercial zip lines is combined with data from playground and backyard zip lines and there is no data provided for publicly accessible, non-commercial zip lines. It would have taken little effort to calculate an odds-ratio but this analysis was not performed. Readers have no way of knowing how many of the injuries might not have occurred if playground and backyard zip lines were eliminated.

3. Standards have existed since 1994, but the authors made no effort to compare the injury rates between sites that were following a standard and those that were not. The findings they present do not support their conclusion.
CONCLUSION

ACCT supports the efforts of ASTM to develop standards in support of public safety. Current ASTM F2959 definitions will need to be reevaluated or created for terms such as “concession”, “commercial recreation”, and “patron-directed”, to name a few. Definitions should be based on operating systems and delivery modes rather than the appearance of a structure. Until those changes are made, the current scope - including the listed exclusions - should remain in place.

How you can be involved:

I. Voting members of ASTM are encouraged to review the ballot and consider the above points in their decision. Following ASTM voting instructions, any negative votes should be preempted with a call to the Technical Contact for that ballot. Affirmative votes can include a comment, and negative votes will require that a comment be submitted. ACCT has written a more extensive paper regarding the ballot rationales which can be accessed via this link if you would like additional information.

II. Non-voting members of ASTM are encouraged to consider joining the organization if your course includes commercial recreation or is used as a concession.

III. Everyone is encouraged to investigate and be informed on what the regulations are in your jurisdiction. Sometimes a jurisdiction regulates a type of aerial adventure course and not others - that can change with new legislation. Become a stakeholder or voice in meetings when new legislation is being considered. Vote on legislation and (as an ACCT or ASTM member) vote on standards when they are revised.

IV. Network regionally and even globally with other programs and professionals in the industry. Ongoing educational opportunities such as the annual ACCT conference are great places to learn and get updates on the industry.

V. Join ACCT! The Association’s membership is made up of a wide variety of stakeholders. Camps, schools, zip line and canopy tours, aerial adventure professionals, regulatory agencies, challenge courses and many more. Members are encouraged to get involved with committees and affinity (networking) groups, or task and work groups (for shorter projects). The website www.acctinfo.org also has great resources with new content posted regularly.

Let us know how we can support you in the great work you are doing. We are always available by email at info@acctinfo.org and +1.303.827.2432.