

## Winterizing your challenge course

*By Sylvia Dresser, Executive Director, Association for Challenge Course Technology*

It's the end of the camp season, and time to put all of the activities and programming elements into hibernation for the winter. What specific things do you need to pay attention to for the challenge course?

Equipment needs to be checked over and cleaned prior to storage. Helmets and harnesses should be cleaned of all sweat residue and dirt in order to make them less attractive to rodents. Some may need to be retired and notes made for ordering replacements next spring. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations for retirement criteria, as well as common-sense guidelines such as looking for rips and tears.

Be cautious about where you store this equipment. The shed that holds everything so nicely during the season may not be the best option for long-term storage due to moisture build up and rodent access. Be especially cautious of stashing equipment in large plastic tubs which can accumulate moisture as the shed heats up and cools down. A climate-controlled environment is always the best option.

Pulleys and shear reduction devices, which may remain rust-free when used regularly, should be taken down and stored properly, as well. Although parts of these devices may be made of stainless steel, there

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are also usually non-stainless components which can rust with continued exposure to moisture. As with the other equipment, a climate-controlled storage area is the best option.

Many course managers choose to take down their cargo nets, multi-vine lines, and other components that are made of rope. Although this is not strictly necessary, it adds longevity to the materials if stored in a clean and dry environment for the months they are not in use.

Most challenge course programs also stock a wide variety of toys and props. Just as with the other equipment, they can be targets for rodents and mold build up and could need replacing. Store them in an area which is clean and dry, where moisture build up will not occur.

Winter is also a great time to do an administrative review of local operating procedures, waivers, releases, and other administrative documents. Check with your risk management advisors such as your insurance representative, attorney, challenge course vendor, and other knowledgeable folks to make sure all of your paperwork is in good shape and up-to-date. It's much more pleasant to review all of this during a slower time with a hot beverage than when preparing to open camp with a million other things to do.

*Sylvia Dresser has served as the Executive Director of the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) since 2002. For more information about ACCT and the upcoming ACCT conference, please visit [www.acctinfo.org](http://www.acctinfo.org). You may contact Sylvia at [sylvia@acctinfo.org](mailto:sylvia@acctinfo.org) or 847-945-0829.*

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