

## Vertical Section Business Meeting & Session

Section Chair: Gene Harrison (Business & Awards), Presentations:

Technical Session Chair: Hazel Barton

Thursday June 16, 2022 9:00am – 1:00pm

Location: Creative Arts

The Vertical Section business meeting will formally conduct the official business of the Vertical Section, including reports about the Section's finances, Section activities, new initiatives, and the annual election of officers and Executive Committee Members.

The Vertical Technical Session will be held immediately after the Business Meeting. The Session allows participants to present new vertical techniques and equipment.

Climbing Contests Awards Ceremony: Climbing contest award certificates and prizes for winners in each category and age group will be presented. Award winners must be present or send a representative to receive their prizes. Join in congratulating the winners of the Vertical Climbing Contests that were conducted on Monday and Tuesday of this week.

### Vertical Section & Session Schedule

Time	Presenter	Title
9:00-10:00	Gene Harrison: Vertical Section Business meeting	
	Hazel Barton – Technical Session Chair – 10:00-11:10 am	
10:00 – 10:30 AM	Ron Miller	NSS Vertical Training Commission: Developing a National Vertical Training Program for U.S. Cavers
10:30 – 10:50	Reilly Blackwell	Educational Factors in American Vertical Caving Incidents, 2000-2020
10:50 – 11:10	Kurt Waldron	A Self Belay Climbing System
11:10-1:00pm	Gene Harrison: Business Meeting continued including Vertical Section Awards & Prizes (starting at 11:30am)	

### Vertical Session Abstracts *(in alphabetical order by presenter)*

#### **Educational Factors in American Vertical Caving Incidents, 2000-2020**

Reilly Blackwell, Hazel Barton, Bonny Armstrong

Vertical caving has inherent risk and can sometimes result in injury or death. This risk can be mitigated with proper training and experience. The American Caving Accidents (ACA) publication collects reports of underground accidents, providing a dataset on how incidents

happen and why. We examined all ACA reports of vertical caving incidents from 2000-2020 and categorized them by whether insufficient training may have contributed, based on causative factors and any background information given in the report. In two populations (experienced cavers and those with insufficient training), we have also identified trends in the most common factors contributing to incidents. This information will be used to inform the development of educational materials by the National Speleological Society's Vertical Training Commission (VTC). Understanding the most common types of vertical accidents and incidents among inexperienced cavers will help the VTC identify gaps in past vertical cave training and ensure that their curriculum covers common hazards.

### **NSS Vertical Training Commission: Developing a National Vertical Training Program for U.S. Cavers**

Ron Miller, Hazel Barton, and Jenny Tison

The newly established NSS Vertical Training Commission (VTC) is an exciting step forward for caver vertical training in the U.S. Building on techniques developed by the NSS Vertical Section and international caving organizations, VTC is creating a national vertical training program to help ensure that U.S. cavers can receive high quality, accessible, and affordable training in vertical caving techniques. Our goal is to create a training program that complements the activities held at convention by the Vertical Section. As stated in our charter, VTC's goal is to "improve vertical safety for cavers, while resisting efforts to develop vertical training certifications as a mechanism to limit or restrict cave access." To those ends, VTC will not provide "certification" in vertical caving techniques, and individuals and organizations who desire to offer or receive vertical training will be under no obligation or expectation to participate in the VTC program. That being said, we do hope and expect that the quality of VTC's curricula and trainers, together with the robust risk management program that we are developing, will prove attractive to grottos, trainers, and cavers throughout the U.S.

VTC's structure includes a number of elements. The **board** manages the overall affairs of the organization, and oversees development and implementation of the training program. The **curriculum committee** develops training curricula for approval by the board. Training curricula currently in development include a master-trainer course, a trainer course, and a Level 1 vertical-training course. The **advisory board** serves as an informal resource for both the board and curriculum committee. VTC trained-and-qualified "**master trainers**" will train and qualify "**trainers**", who in turn will train cavers in vertical caving techniques. This "train-the-trainer" model will help ensure widespread accessibility to high-quality, affordable vertical training.

### **A Self Belay Climbing System**

Kurt Waldron

SRT training usually occurs with a fixed rope that allows the student to climb up and down while practicing various skills. However the use of fixed ropes is, for many reasons, not well suited to help students develop the technique and cardiovascular fitness required for longer

drops. Previous attempts to address this issue have either required additional people or equipment that is not commonly available. This presentation will describe a system that allows a single person to climb a rope for as long as they want, using equipment that should be available to all vertical cavers (rappel rack, pulley, 2 Prussiks, 2 carabiners) The system is ideally suited for a rope Walker climbing system but is compatible with a frog system as well. The system is relatively simple, compact and portable. It is possible to also use this as part of a cardiovascular fitness program. It is possible to construct this system wherever there is at least 7 feet of vertical space available. It has been employed In trees, decks in the back yard, garages and basements. It can work with whatever length of rope is available. Years of operation has shown this system to be simple to operate and highly effective. It is an answer to the need for safe, effective and practical distance climbing while performing SRT training. This system should become a standard used with all SRT training that focuses on Rope Walker and Frog climbing technique. With relatively simple changes, it could be adapted to any vertical system in use today.