



MEDIA

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the *Over the Edge* event?

On July 23-24, 2010 Special Olympics Northern California and its event partner Over the Edge is introducing a unique fundraising event to the Bay Area and Northern California which provides participants the thrilling, once in a lifetime opportunity to safely rappel down the Grand Hyatt San Francisco at Union Square. The event is limited to 100 participants.

Why is Special Olympics Northern California offering this EXTREME fundraising event?

We are always looking for new ways to introduce Special Olympics and our athletes to those who may not know us very well. Our athletes take risks every day trying new skills and pushing themselves to achieve and go beyond what society may think is possible. The nature of this event requires the same kind of spirit and courage from the rest of us – and like any sport, it is fun too.

Special Olympics is about using sporting events as a vehicle to bring individuals who have developmental disabilities together with those who do not. All our events facilitate inclusion, and allow all of us to open our hearts to these individuals while changing our minds about the value and ability of persons with developmental disabilities. Our training and competitions are FREE to our athletes, which require year-round fundraising. Our Over the Edge event promises to raise much-needed funds for our athletes across Northern California.

What is the distance of the rappel? How long will it take?

Participants will rappel from the roof of one of the tallest hotels in San Francisco and rappel 38 stories or 429 feet. It will take between 5 and 15 minutes to get to the bottom.

Is this safe?

Yes, absolutely. The event is set up by a US-based special events company called *Over the Edge*. They set up these events across the country and their events meet and exceed the highest safety standards. All equipment, practices and procedures are approved by Federal and State OSHA, Workers' Compensation and Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA) governing bodies. In the past four years, this event has been performed in more than 35 marketplaces, rappelling thousands of participants.

Who can participate?

Participants must weigh between 110 and 300 pounds, and raise a minimum of \$1,000 by July 8, 2010.. No experience or prior training is needed.



Who is scheduled to rappel?

We will have 100 individuals from many walks of life rappelling during the event. Anyone is welcome to watch the action from Union Square or Levi Plaza. We will have local reporters and media personalities on Friday, July 23 to get things warmed up for the big rappel on Saturday when participants will rappel from 9 a.m.-6 p.m.

Will a Special Olympics athlete rappel during the event?

Actually, we have two athletes who are busy raising money now so they can rappel. They both are very excited.

Will there be any training?

When rappellers arrive on site, they will have the opportunity to practice rappelling from a lesser height. There is a one-story structure on the roof of the Hyatt where rappellers will be able to hang in the harness, find a comfortable position and practice using the descender. They can practice as often as they would like before heading to the rappel site. The same safety procedures are used in the training as in the long rappel so participants will be familiar with them.

How can participants prepare?

The most common complaint from participants after rappelling is that their forearm gets sore during the descent. The squeezing motion required isn't hard, but over a long time it can get tiring. Proper technique and switching arms makes a lot of difference, but using a squeeze ball once in a while doesn't hurt either.

What is this experience going to feel like for the first-time rappeller?

Exhilarating to say the least! Each individual will be wearing a full-body industrial harness and using an industrial descender to go down. To go down, they will be squeezing a handle, and to stop they will need to let go of the handle (or pull back). They can go as fast or as slow as they like. They will be anchored to a back-up line, which is controlled from the top. Should they go too fast, the back-up line will engage.

What's the hardest part?

Participants find that getting their weight off the roof and into the harness is the difficult part. Once they are over the edge, they can stop and take in the view.

The harness squeezes your hips and scrunches up shoulders. Some people feel as though rappelling is a good ab workout because of the semi-sitting position it requires.



How does the rappelling work exactly?

The squeezing motion to activate the descender requires quite a bit of force and using the same hand the entire way down can be tiring. But participants can stop to rest, or switch hands when they need a break.

Rappellers should keep their feet on the concrete to maintain the correct position. If they push off with their feet, they can bounce outwards. The further out they bounce, the more difficult it is to control their spin. Large bounces outward can result in crashes back into the wall, so bounces should be kept small.