

# Guide to Safe Scouting

Scouting America

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Unofficial compilation of the online Guide to Safe Scouting.

Always refer to the official, most current version at:

[scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/](https://scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/)

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# Scouting America Scouter Code of Conduct

On my honor I promise to do my best to comply with this Scouting America Scouter Code of Conduct while serving in my capacity as an adult leader:

- 1 I have or will complete my registration with Scouting America, answering all questions truthfully and honestly.
- 2 I will do my best to live up to the Scout Oath and Scout Law, obey all laws, and hold others in Scouting accountable to those standards. I will exercise sound judgment and demonstrate good leadership and use the Scouting program for its intended purpose consistent with the mission of Scouting America.
- 3 I will make the protection of youth a personal priority. I will complete and remain current with Youth Protection training requirements. I will be familiar with and follow: Scouting America Youth Protection policies and guidelines, including mandatory reporting The Guide to Safe Scouting SAFE Checklist
- 4 When transporting Scouts, I will obey all laws, comply with Youth Protection guidelines, and follow safe driving practices.
- 5 I will respect and abide by the Rules and Regulations of Scouting America, Scouting America policies, and Scouting America provided training, including but not limited to those relating to: Unauthorized fundraising activities Advocacy on social and political issues, including prohibited use of Scouting America's uniform and brand Bullying, hazing, harassment, and unlawful discrimination of any kind
- 6 I will not discuss or engage in any form of sexual conduct while engaged in Scouting activities. I will refer Scouts with questions regarding these topics to talk to their parents or spiritual advisor.
- 7 I confirm that I have fully disclosed and will disclose in the future any of the following: Any criminal suspicion, charges, or convictions of a crime or offense involving abuse, violence, sexual misconduct, or any misconduct involving minors or juveniles Any investigation or court order involving domestic violence, child abuse, or similar matter Any criminal charges or convictions for

offenses involving controlled substances, driving while intoxicated, firearms, or dangerous weapons

- 8 I will not possess, distribute, transport, consume, or use any of the following items prohibited by law or in violation of any Scouting rules, regulations, and policies: Alcoholic beverages or controlled substances, including marijuana  
Concealed or unconcealed firearms, fireworks, or explosives Pornography or materials containing words or images inconsistent with Scouting values
- 9 If I am taking prescription medications with the potential of impairing my functioning or judgment, I will not engage in activities that would put Scouts at risk, including driving or operating equipment.
- 10 I will take steps to prevent or report any violation of this code of conduct by others in connection with Scouting activities.

## **Preface**

All participants in official Scouting activities should become familiar with the Guide to Safe Scouting and applicable program literature or manuals, and be aware of state or local government regulations that supersede Scouting America practices, policies, and guidelines. The Guide to Safe Scouting is an overview of Scouting policies and procedures gleaned from a variety of sources. For some items, the policy statements are complete. Unit leaders are expected to review the additional reference material cited prior to conducting such activities.

In situations not specifically covered in this guide, activity planners should evaluate the risk or potential risk of harm, and respond with action plans based on common sense, community standards, the Scout motto, and safety policies and practices commonly prescribed for the activity by experienced providers and practitioners.

Perhaps this quote by Sir Robert Baden-Powell from his 1914 book *Quick Training for War* is appropriate to include here: "... The books lay down definite principles and examples which serve to guide the leaders when applying their common sense to the situation before them. No two situations are ever precisely the same, and it is therefore impossible to lay down exact rules that should guide in every case, but a man who carries precedents and principles in his head has no difficulty in applying their teaching in supreme moments of sudden emergency ..."

## **Youth Protection and Adult Leadership**

### **Scouting's Barriers to Abuse**

Scouting America has adopted the following policies for the safety and well-being of its members. These policies primarily protect youth members; however, they also serve to protect adult leaders. All parents and caregivers should understand that our leaders are to abide by these safeguards. Parents and youth are strongly encouraged to use these safeguards outside the Scouting program. Registered leaders must follow these guidelines with all Scouting youth outside of Scouting activities.

### **Registration Requirements**

The chartered organization representative, or in their absence the executive officer of the chartered organization, must approve the registration of the unit's adult leaders.

Registration includes:

- Completion of application including criminal background check and mandatory Youth Protection training
- Volunteer Screening Database check

Current Youth Protection training is required for leaders when renewing their registration or at unit charter renewal.

Adult program participants must register as adults and follow Youth Protection policies. (see below update April 2024 on 18 – 20 Adult Leader/Program Participant Policy)

## **Adult Supervision**

Two registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required at all Scouting activities, including all meetings. There must be a registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over in every unit serving females. A registered female adult leader 21 years of age or over must be present for any activity involving female youth or female adult program participants.

Notwithstanding the minimum leader requirements, age and program-appropriate supervision must always be provided.

All adults staying overnight in connection with a Scouting activity must be currently registered as an adult volunteer or an adult program participant. Adult volunteers must register in the position(s) they are serving in. Registration as a merit badge counselor position does not meet this requirement. See FAQ for list of approved adult registration fee required positions. Limited exception below for Cub Scout overnight Programs .

Cub Scout Programs – Overnight Exception: Cub Scout parents or legal guardians taking part in an overnight Cub Scout program with their own child or legal ward are not required to register as leaders. All adults must review the “ How to Protect your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent’s Guide ” that can be found in the front of each Cub Scout Handbook. In addition, the parent or legal guardian must be accompanied by a registered leader at any time they are with youth members other than their own child/ward. All other overnight adults must be currently registered in an adult fee required position.

One-on-one contact between adult leaders and youth members is prohibited both inside and outside of Scouting.

- In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults and/or youth.
- Private online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, etc.) must include another registered leader or parent.
- Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) must include another registered leader or parent.

Discipline must be constructive.

- Discipline must reflect Scouting's values.
- Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- Disciplinary activities involving isolation, humiliation, or ridicule are also prohibited.

## **Adult Supervision: Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs**

### **Responsibility**

Leaders must ensure that all participating in Scouting activities abide by the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Adult leaders and youth members share the responsibility for the safety of all participants in the program, including adherence to Youth Protection and health and safety policies.

- Adult leaders are responsible for monitoring behavior and intervening when necessary.
- Physical violence, sexual activity, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, unauthorized weapons, hazing, discrimination, harassment, initiation rites, bullying, cyberbullying, theft, verbal insults, drugs, alcohol, and pornography have no place in the Scouting program and may result in revocation of membership.

All leaders are required to adhere to the Scouter Code of Conduct.

### **Accommodations**

Tenting



- In Cub Scouting Parents and guardians may share a tent with their family.
- In Older Youth Programs (I.e., Scouts BSA, Sea Scouts, and Venturing)  
Separate tenting arrangements must be provided for male and female adults, and for male and female youth. Youth and adults must tent separately. Youth sharing a tent must be no more than two years apart in age. Spouses may share a tent. As an exception, a parent or guardian may share a tent with their own child if they are of the same sex.

### Lodging/Cabin Accommodations

Whenever possible, separate cabins or lodging should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. Where separate accommodations cannot be provided due to group size or limited availability, modifications may be made. Where completely separate accommodations are not available, additional supervision is required.

- If adults and youth of the same gender occupy single-room accommodations, there must be a minimum of two adults and four youth, with all adults being Youth Protection trained.
- Physical separation by other means, including temporary barriers or space, should be used only when no other arrangements are possible.

### Restrooms

Separate shower and latrine facilities should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. If separate facilities are not available, separate times should be scheduled and posted.

Privacy of youth is respected.

- Adults and youth must respect each other's privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp.
- Adult leaders should closely monitor these areas but only enter as needed for youth protection or health and safety reasons.

## **Accommodations: Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs**

### **Program Requirements**

- The buddy system should be used.
- The use of smartphones, cameras, mirrors, drones, etc., in places or situations where privacy is expected is prohibited.
- All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders.
- Scouting America does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program.
- Hazing and initiations are prohibited and have no part during any Scouting activity.
- All forms of bullying and harassment including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying are prohibited.
- Inappropriate public displays of affection are prohibited.
- Sexual activity is prohibited.
- Appropriate attire is required for all activities.

## **Program Requirements: Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs**

### **Reporting Requirements**

Adult leaders and youth members have a responsibility to recognize, respond to, and report Youth Protection violations and abuse.

## Reporting

### Youth Protection Policy Violations

- Serious Youth Protection policy violations or behaviors that put a youth's safety at risk must be reported to the Scout executive.
- Online reporting is also available at Incident Reporting .

### Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

- All persons participating in Scouting programs are mandated reporters of child abuse.
- Reports must be made to local law enforcement and child protective services. State law may require additional reporting.
- This reporting duty cannot be delegated to any other person.
- Reporting to the Scout executive or Scouts First Helpline ensures that follow-up can occur for the safety of our youth. Scout executives and Scouts First coordinate follow-up actions.

### Scouts First Helpline

- As part of its "Scouts First" approach to the protection and safety of youth, Scouting America has established a dedicated 24-hour helpline to receive reports of known or suspected abuse or behavior that might put a youth at risk. 1-844-SCOUTS1 (1-844-726-8871)
- If immediate assistance is needed in the handling of a sexual abuse allegation, contact Scouts First Helpline (1-844-SCOUTS1).

If someone is at immediate risk of harm, always call 911.

### Additional Resources:

### Accommodation

The older youth Scouting America programs (Scouts BSA, Venturing, Sea Scouting, and Exploring) encourage leadership development, growth, and independence by recommending that youth share accommodations with other youth (must be the same gender per Barriers to Abuse). However, we also recognize that exceptional circumstances may warrant a parent or legal guardian sharing accommodations with their same-gender\* child if the parent/legal guardian meets all leader registration requirements.

Youth siblings of the same gender may share sleeping accommodations regardless of age with permission from their parents or legal guardians.

Campsites must be arranged to separate genders adequately. This separation could be achieved through natural barriers, physical distance, or by the campsite being divided, so long as the separation achieves privacy for both adults and youth, as well as by gender. Adult leaders are responsible for establishing the barriers and reminding Scouts that members of one gender must not enter the tent/housing of another.

### The Buddy System

The buddy system is designed to provide an additional layer of safeguarding by ensuring no youth member is alone and that a buddy can get help in an emergency.

The buddy system is used whenever youth members are outside the line of sight of qualified adult leadership and specific activities where the buddy system is required for participation. Of note:

- The adult unit leadership oversees and approves buddies.
- Buddies are two and can also be three to prevent youth members from being alone.
- A buddy pair cannot be mixed gender, where appropriate a third youth must be added (for a buddy group of 3).
- Youth siblings of the same gender may serve as buddies regardless of age with permission from their parents or legal guardians.

- Except for siblings , it is recommended that the age gap between buddies be at most three years for all non-sleeping activities but must be no more than two years for all tenting.
- When exceptional circumstances warrant, a parent or legal guardian may serve as a buddy for their child's Scouting activities, but youth buddies meeting the above criteria, if available, are always preferred.

### Participation by Parents and Legal Guardians

Parents and legal guardians are encouraged to participate in Scouting activities with their children. However, to meet youth protection policies, some participation—including all overnight activities\*\*—requires the parent or legal guardian to be a registered adult in their child's unit.

\*Special needs remain unchanged.

\*\*See and note the Cub Scout Exception

### 18 – 20 Adult Leader/Program Participant Policy

17-year-old\* youth members transitioning to an adult leader (Scouts BSA), Camp Staff or adult program participant (Order of the Arrow, Venturing and Sea Scouts) upon their 18 th birthday may continue to participate while their adult application and CBC are processed, but this period shall not exceed 30 days. These individuals are subject to the same youth protection policies and guidelines as all adult Scouters even during this registration transition period.

This includes:

- Adhere to the Youth Protection and Barriers to abuse policies of Scouting America.
- Follow housing and tenting policies that apply to adult membership.
- Utilize restroom and shower facilities for adults.
- Buddy system is not required but is recommended for all participants.

- While adult program participants do not require two deep leadership, as they are subject to the same youth protection policies and guidelines as all adult Scouters. All Scouting activities are still required to meet barriers to abuse and must have two leaders over 21.

**\*Exception**

17-year-old youth members whose 18th birthday occurs during active participation at Summer Camp, a High Adventure Base or any Scouting America National Events may complete the activity they started as a youth participant without interruption; however, at its conclusion they must immediately register as an adult. This exception is intended for limited use in scenarios such as completing a trek while staying in the same tent or accommodation in the last few days of an event. It does not change or extend Eagle Scout or other advancement required to be completed by a Scouts 18th Birthday; they will need to follow all applicable advancement policies.

Youth Protection and Barriers to Abuse FAQs

Youth Protection Training

State-by-state Mandatory Reporting Information

## **Aquatics Safety**

### **Resource Material**

Aquatics Supervision is the primary resource for aquatics at the unit level. Aquatics activities at district and council day and short-term/long-term (overnight, resident) camps must follow appropriate National Camp Accreditation Program ( NCAP ) standards.

### **Aquatics Leadership Training Programs**

Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat training programs are available online at [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org) and may also be offered locally by instructors approved by the council aquatics committee or other council authority.

Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue and Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety cover skills needed for Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat policies at the unit level. These training courses are provided locally by qualified instructors who are authorized by the local council.

BSA Lifeguard provides professional-level training for lifeguards at unit or summer camp swimming activities and is provided locally by qualified instructors who are authorized by the local council.

BSA Aquatics Instructor prepares adults for leadership roles in year-round aquatics programs and is recommended for a least one member of the council aquatics committee. Those with BSA Aquatics Instructor training may serve as aquatics directors at district and council day camps, short-term/long-term (overnight) camps. The training is available at National Camping Schools.

### **Responsibilities of Supervisory Personnel**

Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat govern BSA swimming and boating activities. Both specify that the activities are supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who:

- Understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in their care
- Is experienced in the particular activity
- Is confident in their ability to respond appropriately in an emergency
- Is trained and committed to the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat and/or the eight points of Safe Swim Defense.

Unit leadership that accompanies the unit on an outing handles the first and last bullet points above. However, under appropriate circumstances, the unit leader may delegate responsibility to trained individuals within the unit or to on-site professionals for the second and third bullet points above. For example, a Scouts BSA troop at a water park with trained lifeguards on duty need not assign separate unit personnel to perform water rescue. A Venturing crew on a whitewater excursion may rely on a licensed outfitter to provide the necessary equipment and trained guides.

Every possible contingency will not be covered with a hard-and-fast rule, and rules are poor substitutes for experience. Ultimately, each responsible adult leader must personally decide if they understand the risk factors associated with the activity and is sufficiently experienced and well-informed to make the rational decisions expected of a “qualified supervisor.” Scouting America’s training programs listed above help provide the skills, experience, and guidance for making such a determination.



## **Safe Swim Defense**

BSA groups shall use Safe Swim Defense for all swimming activities. Adult leaders supervising a swimming activity must have completed Safe Swim Defense training within the previous two years. Safe Swim Defense standards apply at backyard, hotel, apartment, and public pools; at established waterfront swim areas such as beaches at state parks and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lakes; and at all temporary swimming areas such as a lake, river, or ocean. Safe Swim Defense does not apply to boating or water activities such as waterskiing or swamped boat drills that are covered by Safety Afloat guidelines. Safe Swim Defense applies to other nonswimming activities whenever participants enter water over knee deep or when submersion is likely, for example, when fording a stream, seining for bait, or constructing a bridge as a pioneering project. Snorkeling in open water requires each participant to have demonstrated knowledge and skills equivalent to those for Snorkeling BSA in addition to following Safe Swim Defense. Scuba activities must be conducted in accordance with Scouting America Scuba policy found in the Guide to Safe Scouting . Because of concerns with hyperventilation, competitive underwater swimming events are not permitted in Scouting.

Safe Swim Defense training may be obtained from [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org), at council camps, and at other council and district training events. Additional information on various swimming venues is provided in the Aquatics Supervision guide.

- 1 **Qualified Supervision** All swimming activity must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in their care, and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the eight points of BSA Safe Swim Defense. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Swimming and Water Rescue or BSA Lifeguard to assist in planning and conducting all swimming activities.
- 2 **Personal Health Review** A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for swimming activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection

should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with the parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.

- 3 Safe Area All swimming areas must be carefully inspected and prepared for safety prior to each activity. Water depth, quality, temperature, movement, and clarity are important considerations. Hazards must be eliminated or isolated by conspicuous markings and discussed with participants. Controlled Access: There must be safe areas for all participating ability groups to enter and leave the water. Swimming areas of appropriate depth must be defined for each ability group. The entire area must be within easy reach of designated rescue personnel. The area must be clear of boat traffic, surfing, or other nonswimming activities. Bottom Conditions and Depth: The bottom must be clear of trees and debris. Abrupt changes in depth are not allowed in the nonswimmer area. Isolated underwater hazards should be marked with floats. Rescue personnel must be able to easily reach the bottom. Maximum recommended water depth in clear water is 12 feet. Maximum water depth in turbid water is 8 feet. Visibility: Underwater swimming and diving are prohibited in turbid water. Turbid water exists when a swimmer treading water cannot see their feet. Swimming at night is allowed only in areas with water clarity and lighting sufficient for good visibility both above and below the surface. Diving and Elevated Entry: Diving is permitted only into clear, unobstructed water from heights no greater than 40 inches. Water depth must be at least 7 feet. Bottom depth contours below diving boards and elevated surfaces require greater water depths and must conform to state regulations. Persons should not jump into water from heights greater than they are tall, and should jump only into water chest deep or greater with minimal risk from contact with the bottom. No elevated entry is permitted where the person must clear any obstacle, including land. Water Temperature: Comfortable water temperature for swimming is near 80 degrees. Activity in water at 70 degrees or less should be of limited duration and closely monitored for negative effects of chilling. Water Quality: Bodies of stagnant, foul water, areas with significant algae or foam, or areas polluted by livestock or waterfowl should be avoided. Comply with any signs posted by local health authorities. Swimming is not allowed in swimming pools with green,

murky, or cloudy water. Moving Water: Participants should be able to easily regain and maintain their footing in currents or waves. Areas with large waves, swiftly flowing currents, or moderate currents that flow toward the open sea or into areas of danger should be avoided. Weather: Participants should be moved from the water to a position of safety whenever lightning or thunder threatens. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last lightning flash or thunder before leaving shelter. Take precautions to prevent sunburn, dehydration, and hypothermia. Life Jacket Use: Swimming in clear water over 12 feet deep, in turbid water over 8 feet deep, or in flowing water may be allowed if all participants wear properly fitted, Coast Guard–approved life jackets and the supervisor determines that swimming with life jackets is safe under the circumstances.

- 4 **Response Personnel (Lifeguards)** Every swimming activity must be closely and continuously monitored by a trained rescue team on the alert for and ready to respond during emergencies. Professionally trained lifeguards satisfy this need when provided by a regulated facility or tour operator. When lifeguards are not provided by others, the adult supervisor must assign at least two rescue personnel, with additional numbers to maintain a ratio of one rescuer to every 10 participants. The supervisor must provide instruction and rescue equipment and assign areas of responsibility as outlined in *Aquatics Supervision*. The qualified supervisor, the designated response personnel, and the lookout work together as a safety team. An emergency action plan should be formulated and shared with participants as appropriate.
- 5 **Lookout** The lookout continuously monitors the conduct of the swim, identifies any departures from Safe Swim Defense guidelines, alerts rescue personnel as needed, and monitors the weather and environment. The lookout should have a clear view of the entire area but be close enough for easy verbal communication. The lookout must have a sound understanding of Safe Swim Defense but is not required to perform rescues. The adult supervisor may serve simultaneously as the lookout but must assign the task to someone else if engaged in activities that preclude focused observation.
- 6 **Ability Groups** All youth and adult participants are designated as swimmers, beginners, or nonswimmers based on swimming ability confirmed by

standardized BSA swim classification tests. Each group is assigned a specific swimming area with depths consistent with those abilities. The classification tests must be renewed annually, preferably at the beginning of the season even if the youth has earned the Swimming merit badge. Swimmers pass this test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. Beginners pass this test: Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth, level off, and swim 25 feet on the surface. Stop, turn sharply, resume swimming, and return to the starting place. Anyone who has not completed either the beginner or swimmer tests is classified as a nonswimmer. The nonswimmer area should be no more than waist to chest deep and should be enclosed by physical boundaries such as the shore, a pier, or lines. The enclosed beginner area should contain water of standing depth and may extend to depths just over the head. The swimmer area may be up to 12 feet in depth in clear water and should be defined by floats or other markers.

- 7 **Buddy System** Every participant is paired with another. Buddies stay together, monitor each other, and alert the safety team if either needs assistance or is missing. Buddies check into and out of the area together. Buddies are normally in the same ability group and remain in their assigned area. If they are not of the same ability group, then they swim in the area assigned to the buddy with the lesser ability. A buddy check reminds participants of their obligation to monitor their buddies and indicates how closely the buddies are keeping track of each other. Roughly every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep the buddies together, the lookout, or other person designated by the supervisor, gives an audible signal, such as a single whistle blast, and a call for "Buddies." Buddies are expected to raise each other's hand before completion of a slow, audible count to 10. Buddies who take longer to find each other should be reminded of their responsibility for the other's safety. Once everyone has a buddy, a count is made by area and compared with the total number known to be in the water. After the count is confirmed, a signal is given to resume swimming.

- 8 Discipline Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe swimming provided by Safe Swim Defense guidelines. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants at the water's edge just before the swimming activity begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide steppingstones to a safe, enjoyable outing.

## **BSA Aquatics Play Structure Policy**

Scouting America's Aquatics Play Structure Policy applies to all play structures operated in Scouting whether inflatable, floatable, or fixed structures. It includes, but is not limited to, slides, swings, mats, logs, rockers, and climbing or bouncing devices. Key components of the policy include: program hazard analysis, location, operating procedures, installation/construction, participant safety equipment, safety checks, and emergency action plans. Details on how to implement this policy can be found at [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/Aquatics](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/Aquatics).

## **Classification of Swimming Ability**

The swimmer and beginner classification tests defined in Safe Swim Defense may be administered at the unit level following procedures specified in Aquatics Supervision.

## **Distance Swimming in Open Water**

The following policies apply when distance swimming is conducted outside the confines of a normal Safe Swim Defense area.

- The environment for an open-water swim must conform to Safe Swim Defense guidelines regarding hazards such as submerged trees, currents, and boat traffic, as well as water quality, depth, and clarity.

- Each individual swimmer, or at most a buddy pair, may be accompanied by a rowboat with two people onboard—one skilled in controlling the boat and the other trained in basic water rescue—equipped with a reaching device and flotation aid, continuously watching the swimmers.
- Alternatively, a closed circuit may be established where all swimmers are constantly in reach of safety personnel strategically positioned at fixed points on anchored boats, the shore, or piers. Each participant swims with a buddy, and the number and spacing of the swimmers in the water should not exceed the capacity of the watchers to easily count the swimmers as they move from one zone to another.
- Some competitive swimming events, such as triathlons, also cover long distances. Long-distance swimming races are not approved for Cub Scouts or members of Scouts BSA, but Venturers may participate in triathlon training and competitive events. All swimming activities conducted by Venturing crews must conform to Safe Swim Defense guidelines. Individual Venturers may participate in outside triathlon events sanctioned by USA Triathlon.

## **Snorkeling in Open Water**

All ability groups may use snorkeling equipment within confined areas when following all Safe Swim Defense policies, including visibility for underwater swimming.

Snorkeling is a swimming activity in which one must abide by Safe Swim Defense policies, but the following additions to Safe Swim Defense apply when snorkeling is conducted in open water. “Open water” denotes a temporary swimming area of flexible extent in a natural body of water that may or may not be close to shore.

**Qualified Supervision:** In addition to Safe Swim Defense training and the 21-year-old minimum age, the supervisor must be an experienced snorkeler. At a minimum, the supervisor must possess skills and knowledge matching the Snorkeling BSA Award and have experience with environments similar to those of the planned activity.

**Participant Ability:** All participants in open-water snorkeling must either complete Snorkeling BSA requirements or be a certified scuba diver. Open-water is limited to Scouts BSA, Venturing and Sea Scouts.

**Equipment:** All snorkeling equipment must be properly fitted and in good repair. Full-face snorkel masks (combinations of a built-in snorkel with a mask that covers the mouth and nose) are prohibited. Use of individual flotation devices (inflatable snorkeling vests or life jackets) is required whenever there is a noticeable current or swells, when the bottom is not visible from the surface due to vegetation or limited visibility beyond 8 feet, or when the activity is greater than 50 yards from shore or craft.

A dive flag is required in areas shared by boats. Local regulations specifying the size of the flag and how far snorkelers may be from it must be followed. Weight belts may not be worn unless the participant has scuba certification. Dive boats should be equipped with radios and first-aid kits and should deploy safety lines.

Additional guidance on application of Safe Swim Defense principles to snorkeling may be found in Aquatics Supervision and Snorkeling Safety ( [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/19-176.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/19-176.pdf) ).

## **BSA Scuba Policy**

Scouting America's scuba diving policy is applicable to scuba training/certification courses, and recreational diving activities by BSA members. In addition, council programs are subject to BSA National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP).

Scouting America recognizes scuba industry standards and implements them by using outside agencies for training and certification. Introductory scuba experience programs that are conducted in a swimming pool only must at a minimum meet the requirements set forth by the instructor's recognized scuba training agency.

## **Training and Supervision**

Any diver possessing, displaying, or using scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) in connection with any Scouting-related activity must be either under the direct supervision of a recognized diving instructor or currently certified by a recognized agency. Any introductory scuba experience program or training/certification course must be conducted by a recognized diving instructor.

A recognized professional divemaster or instructor is any currently certified (renewed) divemaster or instructor in good standing with an agency recognized by the RSTC (Recreational Scuba Training Council), with professional liability insurance and is approved by the local BSA council.

Scuba Diving merit badge counselors are not required to be diving instructors. However, the merit badge requirement for earning an open water diver certification must be done under the supervision of a recognized diving instructor.

Recreational diving activities by BSA groups whose members are currently certified must be directly supervised by a responsible adult currently certified (renewed) as a divemaster, assistant instructor, or higher rating from a recognized agency. Dive environments, equipment, depths, procedures, supervision, and buddy assignments must be consistent with each individual's certification.

Because dives by recreational divers may be infrequent, the divemaster or instructor supervising a BSA scuba activity should screen participants prior to open-water activities and provide remedial instruction and practice as appropriate. Such remedial instruction and practice should be in accordance with the policies and standards of the divemaster's or instructor's agency for Scuba Review, Scuba Refresher, or similar program.

Diving using surface-supplied air systems is not authorized in connection with any BSA activity or facility except when done under contract by commercial divers.

## **Age-Appropriate Restrictions**

Youth members registered in Cub Scout programs are not authorized to use scuba in any activity.



Registered members of Scouts BSA and older BSA youth programs (age 11 and above) may participate in introductory Scuba BSA programs and scuba certification programs conducted by recognized agencies appropriate to their age and current level of certification.

Members of BSA programs, based on age, may participate in recreational group dives as unit, district, or council activities, provided such dives are consistent with their certifications and under direct supervision of a responsible adult currently certified as a divemaster, assistant instructor, or higher rating from a recognized agency.

Standards of the recognized scuba agencies require students for open-water certification programs to be at least 15 years of age but allow special certification programs for younger students. Since all instruction for BSA scuba programs must be conducted by professionals certified by a recognized agency, additional agency-specific, age-related restrictions and protocols apply to students under 15 years of age.

The divemaster or instructor supervising a recreational dive by a BSA group must implement the following policies. Additional restrictions and protocols from the certifying agency may apply:

- Depths are limited to 40 feet for divers under 12 years of age and to 60 feet for divers 12 to 14 years of age.
- Additional divemasters or instructors are present to maintain a ratio of one trained supervisor to four buddy pairs (eight divers) containing one to four divers under 15 years of age.
- In addition to the divemaster or trained supervisor, each diver under the age of 15 must have an assigned adult diver who is certified as an open water diver or higher rating as part of the dive group. It is recommended that no more than 3 youth under the age of 15 years of age may dive with the assigned adult diver.

- Note: The 8:1 youth to trained supervisor ratio is a maximum ratio and should be reduced based upon weather, water conditions including current, surface conditions and visibility, participants comfort and skill level and the ability of the divemaster or instructor to control the group.

## **Medical Contraindications**

Each scuba training agency recognized by Scouting America requires a specific health history form be completed prior to enrollment in a certification program (e.g., RSTC Diver Medical Participant Questionnaire). Scouting America requires review and approval of the completed form by a physician. Various risk factors identified on the forms may exclude a person from scuba training, either temporarily or permanently. Risk factors include, but are not limited to, ear and sinus problems, recent surgery, spontaneous pneumothorax, asthma or reactive airway disease (RAD), seizure disorders, diabetes, cardiac disorders, leukemia, sickle-cell disorder, pregnancy, panic disorders, and active psychosis.

The divemaster or instructor supervising a BSA recreational scuba activity/introductory scuba experience program must review the annual health information (i.e., BSA AHMR and RSTC Diver Medical Participant Questionnaire) and evaluate risk conditions using medical standards consistent with those used by their certifying agency and Scouting America. Additional tests or physician consultations may be required to confirm fitness for diving. Consultation with medical specialists knowledgeable about diving medicine (Divers Alert Network's 24-hour hotline) may be needed. If the scuba activity is conducted as part of a council program, then approval to dive is also subject to review and confirmation by the camp health officer and/or medical director/Council Health Supervisor.

The following medical contraindications are based on BSA operational considerations and may be more conservative than those listed in the "Diving Medical Guidance to the Physician."

- 1 Diabetes Mellitus. Diabetes must be well-controlled. Hypoglycemia can lead to unconsciousness and drowning. Diving as part of an official Scouting activity is prohibited for the following: For persons under age 18 with the diagnosis of

- diabetes. Persons using insulin to control diabetes. Persons with diabetes, who are non-insulin dependent and who have had recurrent problems and/or hospitalizations for diabetic problems. Persons with any HbA1c test greater than 7.0 in the previous 12 months. Persons having a documented or suspected hypoglycemic event requiring treatment or assessment in the previous 12 months. Diabetes is considered well-controlled when the following are met: The acceptable oral medications for diabetic control are as single agents only: metformin and metformin analogs; DPP-4 inhibitors (sitagliptin, vildagliptin, alogliptin, saxagliptin and linagliptin); or SGLT2 inhibitors and analogies. Persons who control their diabetes with exercise and diet (without the aid of medication, except metformin) and document HbA1c test value less than 7.0 in the last 6 months may be approved to scuba dive.
- 2 Seizures or Epilepsy. Seizures while snorkeling or scuba diving are extremely dangerous and often fatal. Diving as part of an official Scouting activity is prohibited for participants with a history of seizures. Prospective participants with a history of infant febrile seizures may be considered for diving after formal consultation with a neurologist.
  - 3 Asthma or Reactive Airway Disease. Diving as part of an official Scouting activity is prohibited for persons being treated for asthma or reactive airway disease. Persons with a history of asthma who have been asymptomatic and have not used medications to control asthma for five years or more may be allowed to scuba dive if resolution of asthma is specifically confirmed by their physician and includes provocative pulmonary function testing. Provocative testing can include exercise, hypertonic saline, a hyperpnea test, etc.
  - 4 Psychological and Emotional Difficulties (ADD, ADHD, anxiety, and depression). Any condition should be well-controlled. Many medications are not compatible with scuba diving. Diving as part of an official Scouting activity is prohibited for the following: Participants taking more than one medication for any of these conditions. Participants with anxiety disorder requiring any medication.
  - 5 Severe Risk Factors. Diving as part of an official scouting activity is prohibited for persons with conditions listed as “severe” by the Undersea & Hyperbaric

Medical Society (UHMS). See: UHMS Diving Medical Guidance to the Physician (2020).

Youth, parents, dive supervisors, and physicians with questions or concerns about diving with specific medical conditions should consult the UHMS Diving Medical Guidance to the Physician, Recreational Scuba Training Council (RSTC) and the Divers Alert Network (DAN). DAN medical professionals are available for non-emergency consultation by telephone at 919-684-2948 during business hours or via email.

## **Recognized Agencies**

Recognized agencies are:

- PADI: Professional Association of Diving Instructors
- NAUI: National Association of Underwater Instructors
- SSI: Scuba Schools International
- IDEA: International Diving Educators Association
- PDIC: Professional Diving Instructors Corporation
- SDI/TDI: Scuba Diving International
- YMCA Scuba Program (discontinued in 2008, but certification cards are still recognized)
- NASDS: National Association of Scuba Diving Schools (merged with SSI, but certification cards are still recognized)
- IANTD: International Association of Nitrox and Technical Divers
- RAID: Rebreather Association of International Divers
- SNSI: Scuba and Nitrox Safety International
- NASE: National Academy of Scuba Educators

- In addition to the agencies listed by name, any current member of the World Recreational Scuba Training Council (WRSTC), which includes all RSTC members, is also recognized.

## **Safety Afloat**

BSA groups shall use Safety Afloat for all boating activities. Adult leaders supervising activities afloat must have completed Safety Afloat training within the previous two years. Cub Scout activities afloat are limited to council, district, pack, or den events on calm or gently flowing water that do not include float trips (expeditions). Safety Afloat standards apply to the use of canoes, kayaks, rowboats, rafts, floating tubes, sailboats, motorboats (including waterskiing), and other small craft, but do not apply to transportation on large commercial vessels such as ferries and cruise ships. Parasailing (being towed airborne behind a boat using a parachute), kite-surfing (using a wakeboard towed by a kite), and unit-level recreational use of personal watercraft (small sit-on-top motorboats propelled by water jets) are not authorized BSA activities.

Safety Afloat training may be obtained from [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org), at council camps, and at other council and district training events. Additional guidance on appropriate skill levels and training resources is provided in *Aquatics Supervision*.

- 1 **Qualified Supervision** All activity afloat must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult age 21 or older who understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of those in his or her care and who is trained in and committed to compliance with the nine points of BSA Safety Afloat. That supervisor must be skilled in the safe operation of the craft for the specific activity, knowledgeable in accident prevention, and prepared for emergency situations. If the adult with Safety Afloat training lacks the necessary boat operating and safety skills, then they may serve as the supervisor only if assisted by other adults, camp staff personnel, or professional tour guides who have the appropriate skills. Additional leadership is provided in ratios of one trained adult, staff member, or guide per 10 participants. For Cub Scouts, the leadership ratio is one trained adult, staff member, or guide per five participants. At least one leader must be trained in

- first aid including CPR. Any swimming done in conjunction with the activity afloat must be supervised in accordance with BSA Safe Swim Defense standards. In addition, when swimming is in conjunction with towed activities or motorized watercraft a designated observer or lookout must be no less than 18 years of age and present on the watercraft. It is strongly recommended that all units have at least one adult or older youth member currently trained in BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety to assist in the planning and conduct of all activities afloat.
- 2 **Personal Health Review** A complete health history is required of all participants as evidence of fitness for boating activities. Forms for minors must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. Participants should be asked to relate any recent incidents of illness or injury just prior to the activity. Supervision and protection should be adjusted to anticipate any potential risks associated with individual health conditions. For significant health conditions, the adult supervisor should require an examination by a physician and consult with parent, guardian, or caregiver for appropriate precautions.
  - 3 **Swimming Ability** Operation of any boat on a float trip is limited to youth and adults who have completed Scouting America's swimmer classification test. Swimmers must complete the following test, which must be administered annually. Jump feetfirst into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating. For activity afloat, those not classified as a swimmer are limited to multiperson craft during outings or float trips on calm water with little likelihood of capsizing or falling overboard. They may operate a fixed-seat rowboat or pedal boat accompanied by a buddy who is a swimmer. They may paddle or ride in a canoe or other paddle craft with an adult swimmer skilled in that craft as a buddy. They may ride as part of a group on a motorboat or sailboat operated by a skilled adult.
  - 4 **Life Jackets** Properly fitted life jackets with U.S. Coast Guard approval for the activity must be worn by all persons while boating. Check the life-jacket label

for performance, turning ability, and warnings. Some life jackets are NOT approved for water skiing, wakeboarding, tubing, personal watercraft, or whitewater paddling. For vessels over 20 feet in length, life jackets need not be worn when participants are below deck or on deck when the qualified supervisor aboard the vessel determines that it is prudent to abide by less-restrictive state and federal regulations concerning the use and storage of life jackets, for example, when a cruising vessel with safety rails is at anchor. All participants not classified as swimmers must wear a life jacket when on deck underway. Life jackets need not be worn when an activity falls under Safe Swim Defense guidelines—for example, when an inflated raft is used in a pool or when snorkeling from an anchored craft.

- 5 **Buddy System** All participants in an activity afloat are paired as buddies who are always aware of each other's situation and prepared to sound an alarm and lend assistance immediately when needed. When several craft are used on a float trip, each boat on the water should have a "buddy boat." All buddy pairs must be accounted for at regular intervals during the activity and checked off the water by the qualified supervisor at the conclusion of the activity. Buddies either ride in the same boat or stay near each other in single-person craft.
- 6 **Skill Proficiency** Everyone in an activity afloat must have sufficient knowledge and skill to participate safely. Passengers should know how their movement affects boat stability and have a basic understanding of self-rescue. Boat operators must meet government requirements, be able to maintain control of their craft, know how changes in the environment influence that control, and undertake activities only that are within their personal and group capabilities. Content of training exercises should be appropriate for the age, size, and experience of the participants, and should cover basic skills on calm water of limited extent before proceeding to advanced skills involving current, waves, high winds, or extended distance. At a minimum, instructors for canoes and kayaks should be able to demonstrate the handling and rescue skills required for BSA Aquatics Supervision: Paddle Craft Safety. All instructors must have at least one assistant who can recognize and respond appropriately if the instructor's safety is compromised. Anyone engaged in recreational boating using human-powered craft on flatwater ponds or controlled lake areas free of conflicting activities should be instructed in basic safety procedures prior to

launch, and allowed to proceed after they have demonstrated the ability to control the boat adequately to return to shore at will. For recreational sailing, at least one person aboard should be able to demonstrate basic sailing proficiency (tacking, reaching, and running) sufficient to return the boat to the launch point. Extended cruising on a large sailboat requires either a professional captain or an adult with sufficient experience to qualify as a bareboat skipper. Motorboats may be operated by youth, subject to state requirements, only when accompanied in the boat by an experienced leader or camp staff member who meets state requirements for motorboat operation. Extended cruising on a large power boat requires either a professional captain or an adult with similar qualifications. Before a unit using human-powered craft controlled by youth embarks on a float trip or excursion that covers an extended distance or lasts longer than four hours, each participant should either receive a minimum of three hours training and supervised practice or demonstrate proficiency in maneuvering the craft effectively over a 100-yard course and recovering from a capsize. Self-guided unit trips on Class III (including III- and III+) whitewater may only be done after all participants have received American Canoe Association or equivalent training for the class of water and type of craft involved. Unit trips on whitewater sections of rivers rated Class IV (including IV- and IV+) are only allowed in rafts with a professionally trained guide in each raft. Trips above Class IV are not allowed.

- 7 Planning Proper planning is necessary to ensure a safe, enjoyable exercise afloat. All plans should include a scheduled itinerary, notification of appropriate parties, communication arrangements, contingencies in case of foul weather or equipment failure, and emergency response options. Preparation . Any boating activity requires access to the proper equipment and transportation of gear and participants to the site. Determine what state and local regulations are applicable. Get permission to use or cross private property. Determine whether personal resources will be used or whether outfitters will supply equipment, food, and shuttle services. Lists of group and personal equipment and supplies must be compiled and checked. Even short trips require selecting a route, checking water levels, and determining alternative pull-out locations. Changes in water level, especially on moving water, may pose significant, variable safety concerns. Obtain current charts and information about the waterway and



consult those who have traveled the route recently. Float Plan . Complete the preparation by writing a detailed itinerary, or float plan, noting put-in and pull-out locations and waypoints, along with the approximate time the group should arrive at each. Travel time should be estimated generously. Notification . File the float plan with parents, the local council office if traveling on running water, and local authorities if appropriate. Assign a member of the unit committee to alert authorities if prearranged check-ins are overdue. Make sure everyone is promptly notified when the trip is concluded. Weather . Check the weather forecast just before setting out, and keep an alert weather eye. Anticipate changes and bring all craft ashore when rough weather threatens. Wait at least 30 minutes before resuming activities after the last incidence of thunder or lightning. Contingencies . Planning must identify possible emergencies and other circumstances that could force a change of plans. Develop alternative plans for each situation. Identify local emergency resources such as EMS systems, sheriff's departments, or ranger stations. Check your primary communication system, and identify backups, such as the nearest residence to a campsite. Cell phones and radios may lose coverage, run out of power, or suffer water damage.

- 8 Equipment All craft must be suitable for the activity, be seaworthy, and float if capsized. All craft and equipment must meet regulatory standards, be properly sized, and be in good repair. Spares, repair materials, and emergency gear must be carried as appropriate. Life jackets and paddles must be sized to the participants. Properly designed and fitted helmets must be worn when running rapids rated Class II (including II- and II+) and above. Emergency equipment such as throw bags, signal devices, flashlights, heat sources, first-aid kits, radios, and maps must be ready for use. Spare equipment, repair materials, extra food and water, and dry clothes should be appropriate for the activity. All gear should be stowed to prevent loss and water damage. For float trips with multiple craft, the number of craft should be sufficient to carry the party if a boat is disabled, and critical supplies should be divided among the craft.
- 9 Discipline Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe boating activities provided by Safety Afloat guidelines. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants near the boarding area just

before the activity afloat begins. People are more likely to follow directions when they know the reasons for rules and procedures. Consistent, impartially applied rules supported by skill and good judgment provide steppingstones to a safe, enjoyable outing.

## **Tow Sports**

All participants in towed activity afloat (waterskiing, wakeboarding, kneeboarding, tubing, etc.) must have successfully completed Scouting America's swimmer classification test and must wear a life jacket that has U.S. Coast Guard approval for the activity. Supervision must include both a skilled boat driver who meets state requirements and is currently trained in Safety Afloat and a separate observer. Participants should observe the Water-Skiers Safety Code and the Boat Drivers Safety Code found in Aquatics Supervision . Use only floats specifically designed for towing that provide secure handholds for each rider.

Both the boat operator and the designated observer must visually inspect the water around the boat and confirm by a headcount during a buddy check that everyone in the party is either securely on board or well clear of the propulsion system before the engine is started. This mandate applies to both towed activities and swimming activities in conjunction with the towed activities.

The designated observer must be no less than 18 years of age and present on the watercraft.

## Camping

Scouting America has established the following guidelines for a safe and quality camping experience. Fundamental guiding principles for camping:

- Supervision of camping activities must include qualified, registered, adult leadership.
- At a minimum, one leader present is current in Hazardous Weather Training for all unit types. It is recommended that all leaders complete this training every two years.
- At a minimum, Cub Scout Packs, Webelos dens and Arrow of Light dens / patrols who camp overnight must have a BALOO trained leader present. BALOO is recommended for all Cub Scout leaders who go camping with Cub Scouts.
- Local council approval is needed for unit-coordinated overnight camping activities involving other units not chartered by the same organization. Units that wish to host events involving other units that do not share the same charter partner must have approval from their council. This includes events for packs, troops, crews, and ships from the same council; neighboring councils; the same territory; or other territory .
- Activities must be age- and skill-appropriate for all participants.
- Youth who are not registered in the unit may not accompany parents or siblings in camping programs of Scouts BSA \* , Venturing, and Sea Scouting. For example, siblings who are not registered in the specific troop may not attend Scouts BSA troop campouts as part of a “family camp”. Youth who are not registered in the unit may not accompany parents or siblings in camping programs of Scouts BSA \* , Venturing, and Sea Scouting. Recruiting exception: When recruiting youth not registered in Scouting, they may attend a unit campout if eligible for registration in the unit. When recruiting all program policies apply including an annual health and medical record, parental consent, age appropriate activities.

- For council coordinated overnight camping, NCAP standards for short- or long-term camps must be met as minimum safety and quality standards.

Additional program-centric requirements and limitations to camping may also exist. These are introduced in training modules required of unit leaders and specified in other sections of the Guide to Safe Scouting.

\*See Guidelines for Arrow of Light Scouts Camping Overnight with Scouts BSA below.

### **Additional Guidelines Specifically for Cub Scout Unit-Coordinated Camping**

- Cub Scout camping is a family-centric program.
- Cub Scout camping is limited to their council's designated locations with appropriate facilities. Councils use Pack Overnight Campout Site Appraisal Form ( <https://www.scouting.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/430-90225-Pack-Overnight-ApprForm-FILLABLE.pdf> ) to review and designate locations. Units can request from their council a site appraisal but cannot do their own appraisal.
- Cub Scout pack unit coordinated camping is limited to no more than two consecutive nights.
- Cub Scout youth may tent with a parent or guardian and siblings as outlined in Scouting's Barriers to Abuse.
- As with all Scouting activities, Lion Cub Scout s and Tiger Cub Scouts must have their adult partner present to take part in overnight camping .

- For all other ranks: only in exceptional circumstances, a Cub Scout whose parent or legal guardian cannot attend a unit overnight camping trip may participate under the supervision of another registered adult member in Scouting who is a parent of a Cub Scout who is also attending. The unit leader and a parent or legal guardian must agree to the arrangement, and all Youth Protection policies apply. At no time may another adult accept responsibility for more than one additional “nonfamily member” youth.

## **Webelos and Arrow of Light Camping Additional Guidelines**

Effective June 1, 2024, Webelos is the designated program for 4th graders and Arrow of Light is the designated program for 5th graders. As such, the Arrow of Light program is no longer combined with the Webelos program and the purpose of Webelos (4th grade) is no longer to prepare Cub Scouts to join Scouts BSA. The purpose of the Arrow of Light program is to prepare for Arrow of Light Scouts to join a Scouts BSA troop.

- Only Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light dens/patrols may conduct den coordinated overnight campouts. Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light dens/patrols coordinated overnight campouts are restricted to no more than two consecutive nights.
- Webelos den or Arrow of Light den/patrol coordinated camping is only for the youth members of those dens/patrols, their parents, and their registered adult leadership.
- Webelos den and Arrow of Light den/ patrol coordinated campout must have a BALOO trained adult leader in attendance and all of Scouting's Youth Protection policies apply. Reminder – Cub Scout overnight camping is limited to their council's designated locations with appropriate facilities.
- During Webelos Scout dens and Arrow of Light den/patrol camping, each Scout should attend with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). A Webelos Scout or Arrow of Light Scout whose parent or legal guardian cannot attend a Webelos den or Arrow of Light patrol overnight camping trip may participate

under the supervision of at least two registered leaders. The leaders and a parent or legal guardian must agree to the arrangement, and all Youth Protection policies apply.

- Webelos Scouts and Webelos Scout dens may not participate at a Scouts BSA troop unit campout or at a Scouts BSA “camporee” or other events designed for Scouts BSA during the day and/or overnight, even as visitors.

\* Guidelines for Arrow of Light Scouts Camping Overnight with Scouts BSA

- Arrow of Light Scouts can participate and camp at a unit coordinated campout with a Scouts BSA troop they are eligible to join. They must attend as an Arrow of Light den/patrol under the supervision of two deep leadership from their Arrow of Light den/patrol or pack. All Cub Scout camping requirements still apply, including the Arrow of Light den/patrol must have a BALOO trained adult leader in attendance and all of Scouting’s Youth Protection policies apply.
- Arrow of Light Scouts may participate at a Scouts BSA “camporee” (council coordinated, short-term camp, see NCAP SA-001) during the day and/or overnight in one of two ways: With their Arrow of Light Den/Patrol . Arrow of Light Scouts can attend as an Arrow of Light den/patrol under the supervision of two deep leadership from their Arrow of Light den/patrol or pack. The Arrow of Light Scout’s parent or legal guardian(s) may attend with the Arrow of Light den/patrol and their child, either alongside the two-deep leadership or as part of it if they are registered with the pack. Or As an Individual Scout . Arrow of Light Scouts can attend with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) if the local council coordinates two deep leadership per NCAP Standard HS-502.

## **Hazard Trees**

Hazard trees are dead trees, live trees with dead parts, and live trees that are unstable due to defects and are within striking distance of people or property.

Here are some tips to prevent a hazard tree from affecting your event:

- Assess your site. Look up, look down, and look all around when parking a vehicle, hiking on the trail or selecting a campsite.
- Avoid campsites with hazard trees. Dead trees and dead limbs may fall at any time. Trees without needles, bark, or limbs may indicate structural defects.
- If a campsite has hazard trees but must be used, be sure that all tents, chairs, hammocks, and work areas are outside the trees' failure zone or fall radius. The fall radius on flat ground is 1½ times the height of the tree or tree part that could fail. Sloping ground could increase the danger zone.
- Don't use dead trees, hazard trees, or other unstable objects to support tents, canopies, or hammocks.
- Check the environment constantly for changes, including the weather, as storms can increase the likelihood of trees or parts of trees falling.

## **Lightning Risk Reduction**

In many parts of the country, Scouting activities in the outdoors will be at risk to thunderstorms and lightning strike potential. In a thunderstorm, there is no risk-free location outside.

First, to be prepared for your outdoor adventure, it is important to know the weather patterns of the area. Weather patterns on the Florida coast differ greatly from the mountains of New Mexico and the lakes of Minnesota or the rivers of West Virginia. In addition to patterns, monitor current weather forecasts and conditions of the area you plan to visit to modify your plans if needed.

The National Weather Service recommends that when the "Thunder Roars, Go Indoors! The only completely safe action is to get inside a safe building or vehicle." When a safe building or vehicle is nearby, the best risk-reduction technique is to get to it as soon as possible. Move quickly when you:

- First hear thunder,
- See lightning, or

- Observe dark, threatening clouds developing overhead.

Stay inside until 30 minutes after you hear the last rumble of thunder before resuming outdoor activities.

Shelter—two forms:

- Safe Building—one that is fully enclosed with a roof, walls, and floor, and has plumbing or wiring. Examples of safe buildings include a home, school, church, hotel, office building, or shopping center.
- Safe Vehicle—any fully enclosed, metal-topped vehicle such as a hard-topped car, minivan, bus, truck, etc. If you drive into a thunderstorm, slow down and use extra caution. If possible, pull off the road into a safe area. Do NOT leave the vehicle during a thunderstorm.

Risk Reduction (when no safe building or vehicle is nearby):

- If camping, hiking, etc., far from a safe vehicle or building, avoid open fields, the top of a hill, or a ridge top.
- Spread your group out 100 feet from each other if possible.
- Stay away from tall, isolated trees; flag poles; totem poles; or other tall objects. If you are in a forest, stay near a lower stand of trees.
- If you are camping in an open area, set up camp in a valley, ravine, or other low area, but avoid flood-prone areas. Remember, a tent offers NO protection from lightning.
- Stay away from water, wet items (such as ropes), and metal objects (such as fences and poles). Water and metal are excellent conductors of electricity.
- If boating and you cannot get back to land to a safe building or vehicle: On a small boat, drop anchor and get as low as possible. Large boats with cabins, especially those with lightning protection systems properly installed, or metal marine vessels offer a safer but not risk-free environment. Remember to stay inside the cabin and away from any metal surfaces.



If lightning strikes, be prepared to administer CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) so that you can tend to lightning victims quickly (they do not hold an electrical charge). Take anyone who is a victim of a lightning strike or near-strike to the nearest medical facility as soon as possible, even if the person appears to be unharmed.

For additional information on lightning and weather services, visit [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov) .

## **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use and Abuse**

An important way adult leaders can model healthy living is by following the policies on alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Leaders should support the attitude that they, as well as youths, are better off without tobacco in any form and may not allow the use of tobacco products at any Scouting America activity involving youth participants. This includes the use of electronic cigarettes, personal vaporizers, or electronic nicotine delivery systems that simulate tobacco smoking. All Scouting functions, meetings, and activities should be conducted on a smoke-free basis, with smoking areas located away from all participants.

As outlined in the Scouter Code of Conduct, Scouting activities are not a place to possess, distribute, transport, consume, or use any of the following items prohibited by law or in violation of any Scouting rules, regulations, and policies: alcoholic beverages or controlled substances, including marijuana.

In addition, the Code of Conduct specifies that if you are taking prescription medications with the potential of impairing any functioning or judgment, you will not engage in activities that would put youth at risk, including driving or operating equipment.

## **Medical Information and First Aid**

### **Personal Health and the Annual Health and Medical Record**

Find the current Annual Health and Medical Record (AHMR) at [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr).

The Scouting adventure, camping trips, high-adventure excursions, and having fun are important to everyone in Scouting—and so are your safety and well-being. Completing the Annual Health and Medical Record is the first step in making sure you have a great Scouting experience. So what do you need?

### **All Scouting Events**

All participants in all Scouting activities complete Part A and Part B. Give the completed forms to your unit leader. This applies to all activities, day camps, local tours, and weekend camping trips less than 72 hours. Update at least annually.

Part A is an informed consent, release agreement, and authorization that needs to be signed by every participant (or a parent and/or legal guardian for all youth under 18).

Part B is general information and a health history.

### **Going to Camp?**

A pre-participation physical is needed for long-term camps or for a Scouting event of more than 72 hours, such as Wood Badge and NYLT. The exam needs to be completed by a certified and licensed physician (MD, DO), nurse practitioner, or physician assistant. If your camp has provided you with any supplemental risk information, or if your plans include attending one of the four national high-adventure bases, share the venue's risk advisory with your medical provider when you are having your physical exam.

Part C is your pre-participation physical certification.

## **Planning a High-Adventure Trip?**

Each of the four national high-adventure bases has provided a supplemental risk advisory that explains in greater detail some of the risks inherent in that program. All high-adventure participants must read and share this information with their medical providers during their pre-participation physicals. Additional information regarding high-adventure activities may be obtained directly from the venue or your local council.

## **Prescription Medication**

Taking prescription medication is the responsibility of the individual taking the medication and/or that individual's parent or guardian. A leader, after obtaining all the necessary information, can agree to accept the responsibility of making sure a youth takes the necessary medication at the appropriate time, but Scouting America does not mandate or necessarily encourage the leader to do so.

Standards and policies regarding administration of medication may be in place at Scouting America camps. If state laws are more limiting than camp policies, they must be followed. The AHMR also allows for a parent or guardian to authorize the administration of nonprescription medication to a youth by a camp health officer or unit leader, including any noted exceptions.

## **Risk Factors**

Scouting activities can be physically and mentally demanding. Listed below are some of the risk factors that have been known to become issues during outdoor adventures.

- Excessive body weight (obesity)
- Cardiac or cardiovascular disease
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Diabetes mellitus

- Seizures
- Asthma
- Sleep apnea
- Allergies or anaphylaxis
- Musculoskeletal injuries
- Psychological and emotional difficulties

More in-depth information about risk factors can be found by using this QR code or by visiting [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/risk-factors](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/risk-factors) .

## Questions?

Q. Why does Scouting America require all participants to have an Annual Health and Medical Record? A. The AHMR serves many purposes. Completing a health history promotes health awareness, collects necessary data, and provides medical professionals critical information needed to treat a patient in the event of an illness or injury. It also provides emergency contact information.

Poor health and/or lack of awareness of risk factors have led to disabling injuries, illnesses, and even fatalities. Because we care about our participants' health and safety, Scouting America has produced and required the use of standardized health and medical information since at least the 1930s.

The medical record is used to prepare for high-adventure activities and increased physical activity. In some cases, it is used to review participants' readiness for gatherings like the national Scout jamboree and other specialized activities.

Because many states regulate the camping industry, this Annual Health and Medical Record also serves as a tool that enables councils to operate day and resident camps and adhere to state and Scouting America requirements. Scouting America Annual Health and Medical Record provides a standardized mechanism that can be used by members in all 50 states.

For answers to more questions, visit the FAQ page at [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/medical-formfaqs/](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/medical-formfaqs/).

## **Medication Use in Scouting**

With an increasing number of youth taking prescription medication, leaders need some basic tools and guidance to help them Be Prepared to support youth in the safe use of their medication. Scouting America understands that a leader, regardless of how diligent they may be, may not know or understand every health-related issue of the youth members in their unit. Remember that the taking of prescription medication is the responsibility of the individual taking the medication or that individual's parent or guardian.

Good planning, preparedness, and having some knowledge about handling a youth member's medication is essential in keeping youth safe and healthy. The Medication Use in Scouting guidance is one of those tools, along with the individual's Annual Health and Medical Record.

This tool is primarily used for outings when medication is or may be needed when a parent or guardian is not present. We encourage you to review the guidance periodically—it has eight basic elements:

- Annual Health and Medical Record
- Plan
- Supervision of medication administration
- Labeling
- Storage
- Emergency medication
- Nonprescription (OTC) medications
- Accountability

References: [www.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/SAFE\\_USE\\_OF\\_MEDICATION\\_IN\\_SCOUTING.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/SAFE_USE_OF_MEDICATION_IN_SCOUTING.pdf) and  
[www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/guidelines-policies](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/guidelines-policies)

## **Immunizations**

Scouting America encourages all members of the Scouting community to use available vaccines to fully protect themselves from infectious diseases that are dangerous for children and adults living in the United States. Participants who are not immunized are subject to identification so that they may be located in case of a necessity for isolation or quarantine as required by local public health official directives. Based on risk, a valid (within last 10 years) tetanus immunization is required to participate. State or local requirements for resident camping may be more restrictive.

Immunization Policy FAQs

## **Local Council Membership/Participation Guidelines Regarding Life-Threatening Communicable Diseases**

Scouting America policy regarding communicable diseases (acute or chronic) is as follows:

Local Scouting units and their chartered organizations traditionally determine their own membership and participation, absent any legal constraints. Accordingly, units and chartered organizations allow youth or adult members who have, or are suspected of having, a communicable disease to continue to participate in Scouting activities.

The chartered organization and/or a local Scouting unit may request local council assistance if needed, absent any legal restraints. (See Local Council Membership/Participation Guidelines Regarding Communicable Diseases )

## **First Aid and CPR Training**

First aid is the first help given to someone who has had an accident or other health emergency. If more attention is needed, first-aid treatment helps keep an injured or ill person as safe as possible until medical personnel arrive. Wilderness first aid (WFA) is the assessment of and treatment given to an ill or injured person in a remote environment when a physician and/or rapid transport are not readily available.

First aid and WFA are important to participants in Scouting America programs. Scouting America strongly recommends that participants avail themselves of CPR with automatic external defibrillator (AED) training, along with first-aid and wilderness first-aid training. For certain program participation, there may be requirements for first aid, wilderness first aid, and CPR/AED. There are no unit-centric requirements at this time.

First aid, WFA, CPR/AED must be taught by instructors currently trained by a nationally certified provider such as the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, Emergency Care and Safety Institute, or American Safety and Health Institute. Cub Scouts can even be taught this valuable skill in a family-type setting. Online-only courses are not accepted if a certification is required. Scouting America will accept nationally recognized blended courses—such as from the American Heart Association, American Red Cross, Emergency Care and Safety Institute—where competency can be demonstrated to an instructor.

Further information and advancement in first aid may include wilderness first responder (WFR) and wilderness emergency medical technician (WEMT).

For more information, see the Scouts BSA handbooks and the First Aid merit badge pamphlet.



## **Wilderness First Aid (WFA)**

Wilderness first aid ( [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa) ), the next step up from basic first aid, focuses on teaching assessment skills and using available resources when professional responders might be hours or even days away. A Scouting America led task force has developed a specific Scouting America WFA curriculum and doctrine. WFA certification courses must adhere to Scouting America requirements and include both didactic and hands-on scenario-based practice academic text.

Two members of each crew participating in a trek at Philmont Scout Ranch or one crew member at all other high-adventure bases operated by Scouting America are required to have this certification. It is also recommended that troops or Venturing crews participating in any other high adventures, whether through a council or on their own, receive this training. Also, having more people on a high-adventure trek trained in WFA is always beneficial if an emergency does occur.

Being at least 14 years old and completing a CPR and AED certification course led by a nationally recognized provider are the only prerequisites for the 16-hour course. Providers of WFA credentialing meeting Scouting America WFA requirements include the American Red Cross, Emergency Care & Safety Institute, and those accredited by the American Camp Association.

## **Chemical Fuels and Equipment**

### **Purpose**

This policy directs Scouting America members how to safely store, handle, and use chemical fuels and equipment. Safety and environmental awareness concerns have persuaded many campers to move away from traditional outdoor campfires in favor of chemical-fueled equipment used for cooking, heating, and lighting. Be aware that chemical fuels and equipment create very different hazards than traditional wood, charcoal, and other solid fuels; this policy defines how to address those hazards.

Before any chemical fuels or chemical-fueled equipment is used, an adult knowledgeable about chemical fuels and equipment, including regulatory requirements, should resolve any hazards not specifically addressed within this policy.

### **Definitions**

**Chemical fuels** —Liquid, gaseous, or gelled fuels.

**Approved chemical-fueled equipment** —Commercially manufactured equipment, including stoves, grills, burners, heaters, and lanterns that are designed to be used with chemical fuels.

**Prohibited chemical-fueled equipment** —Equipment that is handcrafted, homemade, modified, or installed beyond the manufacturer's stated design limitations or use. Examples include alcohol-burning "can" stoves, smudge pots, improperly installed heaters, and propane burners with their regulators removed.

**Recommended chemical fuels** —White gas (Coleman fuel); kerosene; liquefied petroleum gas fuels, including propane, butane, and isobutane; vegetable oil fuels; biodiesel fuel; and commercially prepared gelled-alcohol fuel in original containers.

**Chemical fuels not recommended** —Unleaded gasoline; liquid alcohol fuels, including isopropyl alcohol, denatured ethyl alcohol, and ethanol; and other

flammable chemicals that are not in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for chemical-fueled equipment.

## **Storing, Handling, and Using Chemical Fuels and Equipment**

An adult knowledgeable about chemical fuels and equipment should always supervise youths involved in the storage, handling, and use of chemical fuels and equipment.

Operate and maintain chemical-fueled equipment according to the manufacturer's instructions and in facilities or areas only where and when permitted.

Using liquid fuels for starting any type of fire—including lighting damp wood, charcoal, and ceremonial campfires or displays—is prohibited.

No flames in tents. This includes burning any solid, liquid, gel, or gas fuel—including tents or teepees that feature or support stoves or fires; and any chemical-fueled equipment or catalytic heaters.

Store chemical fuels in their original containers or in containers designed for immediate use. Securely store any spare fuel away from sources of ignition, buildings, and tents.

During transport and storage, properly secure chemical fuel containers in an upright, vertical position.

## **Activity Planning and Risk Assessment**

### **Policy Regarding Prohibited and Unauthorized Activities**

Scouting America's Charter and Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, policies, and program guidelines help provide a safe and consistent program. Council and unit charters as well as individual registration are conditioned upon adherence to those requirements.

Adult volunteer leaders and units that allow youth or units to engage in prohibited or unauthorized activities in contravention of program requirements, and leaders who fail to take steps to stop any such activities, put youth and the organization at risk.

Only leaders possessing the educational, emotional, and moral qualities necessary for leadership are permitted to register and serve as Scouters. Actions which put youth or the organization at risk call into question the suitability of a Scouter for leadership.

If it is determined that youth were allowed to participate or engage in unauthorized or prohibited activities, a leader's registration and/or the unit's charter may be subject to adverse action, including revocation.

**Approved by the National Executive Committee, February 13, 2018**

## **Prohibited Activities**

The Scouting program incorporates common activities such as swimming, climbing, cycling, archery, and snowboarding that, depending on the details, may include both real and perceived risks to participants. Those risks are managed by Scouting America policies, procedures, and guidelines that set limits and incorporate specific features such as safety equipment or qualified supervision. Guidance is provided by, but not limited to, the Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities , Safe Swim Defense , Safety Afloat , Climb on Safely , Belay On , and Scouting America's shooting sports program. Activity components outside of Scouting America program guidelines are prohibited as follows:

- 1 Nonadherence to the Scouter Code of Conduct
- 2 Any activity that is not aligned with the current Age-Appropriate Guidelines for Scouting Activities
- 3 Aquatic activities that fail to comply with Safe Swim Defense and/or Safety Afloat
- 4 Activities related to COPE or climbing that fail to comply with Climb on Safely and/or Belay On . This includes activities on courses that are not constructed to comply with standards set by the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) and/or are not inspected annually for integrity.
- 5 Flying—use of hang gliders, ultralights, experimental aircraft, or nontethered hot-air balloons, or flying in an aircraft as part of a search-and-rescue mission (exceptions: transportation to Scouting events by commercial airlines; flying or tethered hot-air balloon flights following completion of the Flying Plan Checklist )

- 6 Motorized vehicles used as program or activities—including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-road vehicles, motorized personal watercraft (PWC), snowmobiles, E-Bikes and motorized speed events (exceptions: council-approved ATV and PWC programs that comply with National Camp Accreditation Program [NCAP] standards ; go-karting conducted at a commercial facility that provides equipment and supervision of cart operation; youth completing the Motorboating merit badge)
- 7 Shooting or throwing sports outside of Scouting America program literature and guidance. Examples of prohibited activities (with exceptions in italics) include: Anvil shooting, flintlocks, exploding targets, and devices regulated by the National Firearms Act Blow guns, boomerangs, and ballistae Homemade firearms and air cannons, potato cannons, and tennis ball cannons Throwing of shovels, torpedoes, spikes, stars, shotput, logs, hammers, and cabers Inappropriate ammunition such as pumpkins, hard slingshot ammo, and tracers Cannons Crossbows (except at the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve) Reloading ammunition, and using reloaded ammunition (except at Philmont Scout Ranch) Spears, pole spears, and spear guns
- 8 Open or concealed carry or use of firearms at any Scouting activity, with the following exceptions: Law enforcement officers who are required to carry firearms within their jurisdiction Use as part of an official Range and Target activity

Some activities considered by youth and leaders are not compatible with the Scouting program. Some have unacceptable risks that have been confirmed by serious or even fatal consequences. Others are not compatible with the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The activities listed below are strictly prohibited as part of any Scouting program.

The list is not comprehensive, but it serves as a definitive list of prohibited activities and it offers a broad sense of what is not allowed as a Scouting activity. Scouting leaders should refer to this list when deciding on activities, and they should reflect vigorously on how any activity outside our published program would resonate with the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

Scouting America prohibits the following activities (with exceptions in italics):

- 1 Extreme or action sports and associated activities that involve an unusually high degree of risk and often involve speed, height, a high level of exertion, and specialized gear or equipment. These activities include but are not limited to: Parkour Cliff diving or jumping Whitewater paddling on rapids rated Class V or above Tree climbing Free or solo climbing Aerobatics while snowboarding, skiing, wakeboarding, or mountain biking Parachuting, BASE jumping, or wingsuiting Parasailing or any activity in which a person is carried aloft by a parachute, parasail, kite, flying tube, or other device Participation in amateur or professional rodeo events, council or district sponsorship of rodeos, and use of mechanized bulls or similar devices ( This restriction does not apply to bicycle safety rodeos. ) Jumping with bungee-cord devices (sometimes called shock-cord jumping) Bubbleball, Knockerball®, zorbing, Battle Balls™, bubble soccer, bubble football, and similar orb activities where participants collide or roll around on land or water Flyboarding/jet-boarding Highlining XPOGO Trampolines and trampoline parks ( exception: commercial facilities that meet or exceed current ASTM Standard F2970-15 )
- 2 Use of accelerants, chemicals, or pyrotechnics to start fires or in ceremonies (exception: solid fire starters designed and manufactured for this purpose)
- 3 Using homemade or modified equipment that fails to comply with Scouting America’s Chemical Fuels and Equipment policy
- 4 Burning any solid, liquid, gel, or gas fuel in a tent—including tents or teepees that feature or support stoves or fires
- 5 Excavations or entry into fox holes, makeshift caves, tunnels, trenches, or ditches. Includes digging in sand dunes. (exception: snow quinzees and caves — see Okpik, Cold-Weather Camping, No. 34040)
- 6 Activities where participants strike at each other, including martial arts, boxing, combat games, gladiator games, and reenactment activities such as live action role-playing games (LARP) and Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) activities (exception: tai chi)

- 7 Activities where participants shoot or throw objects at each other, such as rock-throwing, paintball, laser or archery tag, sock fights, or dodgeball
- 8 Service projects that fail to comply with federal, state, or local laws regarding the safety of youth.
- 9 Use of power tools by youth, including chainsaws, log splitters, wood chippers, and power saws or mills ( Youth may use age-appropriate tools following tool manufacturers' guidelines. See also SAFE Tool Use: [filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-028.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-028.pdf) )
- 10 Exploration of abandoned mines
- 11 Fireworks, including selling of fireworks (exception: fireworks displays by a certified or licensed fireworks control expert)
- 12 Water chugging, and eating or drinking competitions such as “chubby bunny” or hot dog eating contests
- 13 Hunting
- 14 Intramural, interscholastic, or club sport competitions or activities

## **Activity Planning and Risk Assessment**

No organization, including Scouting America, can anticipate every possible activity that could be conducted as part of a unit, district, or council event. As such, it is neither the intent nor the desire of Scouting America to provide specific guidance on subjects that are not core to the program or part of our literature.

For those activities that support the values of Scouting America, there are several tools available for participants that will help them plan for a fun and safe tour, activity, or event. Good planning and preparedness prior to executing the activity is key to success. This guide is one of those tools. Other such resources are the Program Hazard Analysis, safety checklists, and the PAUSE card.



As you use these tools, reflect on the words of Robert Baden-Powell: Be Prepared ... the meaning of the motto is that a Scout must prepare himself by previous thinking out and practicing how to act on any accident or emergency so that he is never taken by surprise.

## **Program Hazard Analysis**

This tool is primarily used for program areas within camp properties, camps or high-adventure bases. It covers specific risks to the program areas. This tool has a defined way of assessing probability and severity of risks. This tool assesses risks initially, as if there are no protective measures in place, then looks at the risks again with protective measures.

**Reference:** [www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/680-009.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/680-009.pdf)

## **Safety PAUSE**

The Safety PAUSE process stresses the importance of a last-minute safety check in the field. By encouraging each youth or adult leader to pause and reflect on the tasks at hand just before beginning, you have an opportunity to take necessary precautions to prevent any present or potential hazards.

**Reference:**  
[www.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-046.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-046.pdf)

## **The SAFE Checklist**

Scouts and their parents expect all Scouting America activities to be conducted safely. To ensure the safety of participants, Scouting America expects leaders to use the four points of SAFE when delivering the Scouting program.

**Reference: [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safe/](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safe/)**

**Supervision :** Youth are supervised by qualified and trustworthy adults who set the example for safety. Accepting responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth under their care.

- Ensuring that adults are adequately trained, experienced, and skilled to lead the activity, including the ability to prevent and respond to likely problems and potential emergencies.
- Knowing and delivering the program of Scouting America with integrity.
- Using qualified instructors, guides, or safety personnel as needed to provide additional guidance.
- Maintaining engagement with participants during activities to ensure compliance with established rules and procedures.

**Assessment:** Activities are assessed for risks during planning. Leaders have reviewed applicable program guidance or standards and have verified the activity is not prohibited. Risk avoidance or mitigation is incorporated into the activity.

- Predetermining what guidance and standards are typically applied to the activity, including those specific to Scouting America program.
- Planning for safe travel to and from the activity site.
- Validating the activity is age appropriate for Scouting America program level.
- Determining whether the unit has sufficient training, resources, and experience to meet the identified standards, and if not, modifying the activity accordingly.
- Developing contingency plans for changes in weather and environment and arranging for communication with participants, parents, and emergency services. not be maintained.

**Fitness and Skill:** Participants' Annual Health and Medical Records are reviewed, and leaders have confirmed that prerequisite fitness and skill levels exist for

participants to take part safely.

- Confirming the activity is right for the age, maturity, and physical abilities of participants.
- Considering as risk factors temporary or chronic health conditions of participants.
- Validating minimum skill requirements identified during planning and ensuring participants stay within the limits of their abilities.
- Providing training to participants with limited skills and assessing their skills before they attempt more advanced skills.

Equipment and environment: Safe and appropriately sized equipment, courses, camps, campsites, trails, or playing fields are used properly. Leaders periodically check gear use and the environment for changing conditions that could affect safety.

- Confirming participants' clothing is appropriate for expected temperatures, sun exposure, weather events, and terrain.
- Providing equipment that is appropriately sized for participants, is in good repair, and is used properly.
- Ensuring personal and group safety equipment is available, properly fitted, and used consistently and in accordance with training.
- Reviewing the activity area for suitability during planning and immediately before use, and monitoring the area during the activity through supervision.
- Adjusting the activity for changing conditions or ending it if safety cannot be maintained.

## **Sports and Activities**

### **Range and Target Activities**

Scouting America adheres to its longstanding policy of teaching its youth and adult members the safe, responsible, and intelligent handling, care, and use of firearms, air rifles, BB guns, and archery equipment in planned, carefully managed, and supervised programs.

Except for law enforcement officers required to carry firearms within their jurisdiction, firearms shall not be brought on camping, hiking, backpacking, or other Scouting activities except those specifically planned for target shooting under the supervision of a currently certified national shooting sports director or National Rifle Association firearms instructor.

All range and target activities held during a day camp, short-term camp, or long-term camp will follow the current NCAP standards. All range and target activities held outside of a council's camp will follow the program as outlined in the National Range and Target Activities Manual ( [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/range-activities](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/range-activities) ).

The National Range and Target Activities Manual includes all of the information you will need pertaining to appropriate guns used at each level of Scouting, the required range supervision, and training that youth need to safely participate in the program.

#### **Knife and Tomahawk Throwing**

These are age-appropriate activities for Scouting America members and Venturers following the SAFE Checklist and following the guidelines outlined in the National Range and Target Sports Manual .

### **Caving**

Caving is a specialized activity requiring advanced planning and technical skills. Scouting units participating in caving must follow the guidelines set forth in Cave Safely Cave Softly ( [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/) ).

Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts are encouraged to visit commercially operated caves and lava tubes. For commercial operations, leaders should follow the guidelines set by the operators and reference *Cave Safely Cave Softly* for more information. Non-commercial “easy caves” with no access control, such as those in parks where people of all abilities are allowed uncontrolled access, may also be suitable for Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts.

Scouting America–age youth are generally mature enough to enter “easy wild caves,” which means easily accessible, non-technical/non-vertical caves. A “wild cave” is anything that is not commercially operated with a professional tour guide.

Older Scouts Scouting America members, Sea Scouts, and Venturers should be ready to explore more technical wild caves.

## **Canyoneering**

Canyoneering is a specialized activity requiring advanced planning and technical skills. Scouting units participating in canyoneering must follow the guidelines set forth in *Canyoneering Safely* ( [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/) ).

The American Canyoneering Association has developed a rating system for canyons that can be found at [www.canyoneeringusa.com/intro/canyon-ratings](http://www.canyoneeringusa.com/intro/canyon-ratings) .

Cub Scouts may hike ACA-rated Class 1 canyons with age-appropriate bouldering over obstacles or other steep faces without going more than a few feet off the ground with trained adult spotters. Cub Scouts may not participate in canyoneering activities in ACA Class 2 or higher canyons.

Webelos Scouts may hike in ACA-rated Class 1 and Class 2 canyons with age-appropriate bouldering over obstacles or other steep faces without going more than a few feet off the ground with trained spotters. Webelos Scouts may not participate in canyoneering activities in ACA Class 3 or higher canyons.

Scouting America members may participate in canyoneering activities in ACA-rated Class 1 and Class 2 canyons with age-appropriate bouldering obstacles and trained spotters. They may also participate in canyoneering activities in ACA-rated Class 3 technical canyons. All bouldering moves should have appropriate spotters.

Scouting America members may not participate in canyoneering activities in ACA-rated Class C canyons.

Older Scouting America members, Sea Scouts, and Venturers may participate in canyoneering activities in ACA-rated Class 1 and Class 2 canyons with age-appropriate bouldering obstacles with trained spotters. They may also participate in canyoneering activities in ACA Class 3 and Class C canyons. All bouldering moves should have appropriate spotters.

Participation in canyoneering activities in ACA-rated Class 4 canyons is not allowed for any Scouting America units.

## **Climbing and Rappelling**

The requirements applicable to climbing and rappelling listed in National Camp Accreditation Program (NCAP) , apply to district and council activities.

- Climbing activities in which the participant's feet are more than 6 feet off the ground must be top-rope belayed.
- All rappelling activities must be properly belayed ( NCAP standard PS-206 ).

Climb On Safely ( [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/COPE/) ) applies to climbing activities operated by a unit.

- Scouting America units conducting their own climbing activities must follow the requirements set forth in Climb On Safely.
- Leaders who supervise unit climbing activities must have current Climb On Safely training (available at [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org) ).

Cub Scouts and Webelos Scouts can do the following:

- Participate in bouldering (climbing on boulders or bouldering walls) no higher than the climber's shoulder height with adults (or camp staff with adult supervision) who are trained to provide spotting for bouldering activities.

In addition, Webelos Scouts can:

- Rappel with a trained adult belayer and backup. In addition, Scouts BSA members can:
- Belay with supervision and a backup.

In addition, older Scouts BSA members (age 13 and older), Sea Scouts, and Venturers may participate in lead climbing, and snow and ice climbing, subject to the following:

- All participants must be at least 13 years old.
- Qualified instructors must have training from a nationally recognized organization that trains climbing instructors in the appropriate special activity. Note: Scouting America National Camping School does not train climbing directors and instructors in lead climbing, or snow and ice climbing.
- Lead climbing without a top-rope belay is prohibited as part of a unit, council, or district activity.
- Units may conduct activities involving lead climbing with adult supervision and qualified instructors.

## **COPE Activities**

Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience (COPE) activities are defined as low or high challenge course activities, including but not limited to those listed in Chapter 20: Low-Course Activities or Chapter 21: High-Course Activities in *Belay On* ( [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/cope/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/cope/) ). They are to be used only in conjunction with council or district activities that meet the current NCAP standards.

Units may participate in age-appropriate initiative games. These are group challenge activities that do not involve constructed facilities, such as Blind Square, Couples Tag, Hoops Around the Circle, and Traffic Jam. See Chapter 3: Warm-Ups and Initiative Games in *Belay On* . Units shall not construct low- or high-course elements, including zip lines.

Individual participation is based on the judgment of the COPE director or Level II instructor for facilities operated by districts and councils, and jointly by the facility operator/owner and unit leader for commercial facilities. Cub Scout units may not participate in COPE, zip line, canopy tour, or aerial adventure park activities unless those activities are specifically designed for Cub Scout-age youth participation, such as climbing facilities or obstacle courses. Refer to the age-appropriate guidelines chart in the Guide to Safe Scouting .

## **Zip Lines, Canopy Tours, and Aerial Adventure Parks**

Commercial adventure facilities are becoming more popular as activity destinations for Scouting America units. There also has been an increase in incidents, some of them serious. For this reason, special care should be taken before participating in these activities.

Members of troops, ships, and crews may conduct unit outings involving zip line, canopy tour, and aerial adventure park activities when such facilities are operated according to Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT) or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) operating standards. Unit leaders shall verify current compliance to these standards with facility operators/owners prior to scheduling the activity. Councils with COPE or climbing programs have access to the ACCT standards, and the local council COPE and climbing committee can assist unit leaders in evaluating such facilities. Councils that do not have COPE or climbing programs should contact their COPE-and-climbing area advocate or the national COPE and Climbing subcommittee for this information.

Unit leaders shall verify that the operators of commercial facilities will comply with the following two BSA NCAP standards from PS-206:

- Measures are in place to provide for the safety of everyone at the program site, including observers. Everyone must be belayed or anchored when within 8 feet of an edge where a fall of more than 6 feet could occur.
- A consistent process is used by all COPE and climbing staff to ensure that clothing, head protection, environment, connections, and knots are double-checked in any belayed events for staff members and participants.



## **Use of COPE Activities and Initiative Games in Training and Other Events**

Use of low or high COPE activities in council or district training or other programs shall comply with NCAP standards.

Many training programs, such as Wood Badge, NYLT, and unit leader training, have adopted initiative games in their curriculum to strengthen group experiences. This can be a valuable addition to the training curriculum or activity when handled properly. Course and activity directors should make certain that the following important concerns are addressed:

- Proper supervision. Participants should be properly supervised during an activity to make sure they are following safety procedures throughout the activity. Activity areas/facilities should be monitored or disabled when not in use so that participants do not utilize them on their own without proper supervision.
- Discipline. Leaders should determine that participants have sufficient maturity and self-control to participate in the activities that are planned.
- Trained instructors. All activity instructors/leaders must be properly trained to operate whatever initiative games they use in a safe and effective manner. The council COPE and climbing committee is an excellent resource to assist with obtaining proper training to operate the activities safely and effectively.

## **Slacklining**

As with any activity involving height and motion, there is risk involved. Before units, districts, or councils decide to promote or host slacklining activities and other adventure sports, they must follow the SAFE Checklist.

Staff members for these types of events are responsible for learning proper setup, operational guidelines, and safety techniques. Equipment used for these activities must be designed for the adventure sport industry and will be exposed to extreme

forces. Therefore, it should not be used for other purposes. Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

Fall precautions should include spotters or crash pads. Stepping off the line safely is recommended when a participant feels they are about to fall. Trees used for anchors should be protected from damage and be at least 8 inches in diameter. The line should never be more than 3 feet high. Never allow more than one participant on the line at a time. Acrobatics (any time your head is lower than your torso) are prohibited.

## **Knives**

A sharp pocketknife with a can opener on it is an invaluable backcountry tool. Keep it clean, sharp, and handy. Scouting America believes choosing the right equipment for the job at hand is the best answer to the question of what specific knife should be used. We are aware that many councils or camps may have limits on the type or style of knife that should be used. Scouting America neither encourages nor bans fixed-blade knives nor do we set a limit on blade length. Since its inception, Scouting America has relied heavily on an outdoor program to achieve its objectives. This program meets more of the purposes of Scouting than any other single feature. We believe we have a duty to instill in our members, youth and adult, the knowledge of how to use, handle, and store legally owned knives with the highest concern for safety and responsibility.

Remember—knives are not allowed on school premises, nor can they be taken aboard commercial aircraft.

## **Parade Floats and Hayrides**

Scouting America's prohibition on the transportation of passengers in the backs of trucks or on trailers may be tempered for parade floats or hayrides, provided that the following points are strictly followed to prevent injuries:

- 1 Transportation to and from the parade or hayride site is not allowed on the truck or trailer.

- 2 Those persons riding, whether seated or standing, must be able to hold on to something stationary.
- 3 Legs must not hang over the side.
- 4 Flashing lights must illuminate a vehicle used for a hayride after dark, or the vehicle must be followed by a vehicle with flashing lights.

## **Unit Fundraisers**

Include these safety considerations when planning a unit fundraiser:

- 1 Money-earning projects should be suited to the ages and abilities of youth participants.
- 2 Proper adult supervision must be provided.
- 3 Youth must engage in money-earning projects only in neighborhoods that are safe and familiar and should use the buddy system.
- 4 Leaders must train youth members to never enter the home of a stranger and to know whom to contact in case of an emergency.
- 5 Youth participants must be familiar with safe pedestrian practices and participate during daylight hours only.
- 6 Compliance requirements: Check local statutes regarding solicitation rules and permits. A Unit Money-Earning Application must be obtained from the local council service center.

## **Bicycle Safety**

Follow these basic safety tips when you ride.

- Wear a properly fitted helmet. Protect your brain; save your life! Bicycle helmets can reduce head injuries by 85 percent, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

- Adjust your bicycle to fit. Make sure you can stand over the top tube of your bicycle.
- Assure bicycle readiness. Make sure all parts are secure and working well. Assure that tires are fully inflated and brakes are working properly.
- See and be seen. Wear clothing that makes you more visible, such as bright neon or fluorescent colors. Wear reflective clothing or tape. Avoid riding at night.
- Watch for and avoid road hazards. Stay alert at all times. Be on the lookout for hazards, such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, animals, or anything that could cause you to crash. If you are riding with friends and you are in the lead, call out and point to the hazard to alert the riders behind you.
- Follow the rules of the road. Check and obey all local traffic laws. Always ride on the right side of the road in the same direction as other vehicles. Go with the flow—not against it! Yield to traffic and watch for parked cars.

## **Skating Safety**

These safety tips emphasize prevention, and are meant to cover all Scouting America skating programs.

- Always skate within your ability. If you don't know how to skate, seek instruction. If you haven't skated in a while, take it slow and easy. Don't try to skate too fast or do complicated tricks. Know how to stop safely.
- Skate at a safe and comfortable speed. Avoid dangerous tricks.
- Watch where you skate! When skating indoors, keep in mind that others have varying abilities of expertise. Skating into people can cause serious injury.
- Racing, hockey, or similar activities are to be held only in areas free of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and hazardous objects. No skating activity is authorized on streets that have not been blocked off to traffic.

- Skate on a smooth surface or terrain. A skating center is best because the surface is well maintained. When you skate outdoors, check the surface. Any small rock, pothole, or crack could cause you to lose your balance and fall. Iced surfaces should be rigid and completely frozen.
- Do not skate at night. Others can't see you and you can't see obstacles or other skaters.
- Wear full protective gear (helmets, knee and elbow pads, and wrist protectors) when skating outdoors. The gear is optional when skating indoors at a skating center as risk of injury is reduced when the skating surface is smooth and well maintained, and discipline is enforced. Protect your brain; save your life! Helmets can reduce head injuries by 85 percent, according to the NHTSA. Visit their website at [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov).
- Wear properly fitting equipment and assure equipment readiness. Make sure all parts are secure and working well. Before permitting equipment to be used in a Scouting America activity, the supervisor should determine that all skates and/or skateboards are well maintained and in good repair, consistent with the manufacturer's recommendation. Actual maintenance and repair are the responsibility of the owner.
- See and be seen. Wear clothing that makes you more visible, such as bright neon or fluorescent colors. Wear reflective clothing or tape. Avoid skating at night.
- Watch for and avoid road hazards. Stay alert at all times. Be on the lookout for hazards, such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, animals or anything that could cause you to crash. If you are skating with friends and you are in the lead, call out and point to the hazard to alert the skaters behind you.
- Follow the rules of the road. Check and obey all local traffic laws. Yield to traffic and watch for parked cars. NEVER "hitch a ride" on any vehicle.

## **Horsemanship Activities**

Horsemanship activities in Scouting include merit badge activities, arena rides, multi-day trips (including treks and cavalcades), and Cub Scouting familiarization rides.

Each sponsoring council should take care to design age- and activity-appropriate procedures and guidelines for each particular equine activity. Policies and procedures should include routine horse care, participant guidelines, staff policies, and emergency plans.

Requirements must also be met if the horseback riding program is provided by or at an off-site facility. The council must enter a contractual agreement as outlined in day-camp, short-term camp, or long-term camp standards.

## **Insurance**

Consider the possibility that an accident could occur involving your unit. Take proper steps in advance to assess the risks and eliminate potential hazards and fully protect yourself and others responsible for the outing. An adequate emergency fund will cover minor emergencies.

### **Comprehensive General Liability Insurance**

This coverage provides primary general liability coverage for registered adults of Scouting America who serve in a volunteer or professional capacity concerning claims arising out of an official Scouting activity, which is defined in the insurance policy as consistent with the values, Charter and Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, operations manuals, and applicable literature of Scouting America. This coverage responds to allegations of negligent actions by third parties that result in personal injury or property damage claims that are made and protects Scouting units and chartered organizations on a primary basis.

Scouting America general liability insurance program provides volunteers and chartered organizations additional excess coverage for motor vehicles above a local council's automobile liability policy or a volunteer's or chartered organization's automobile or watercraft liability policy. The owner's motor vehicle (automobile) or watercraft liability insurance is primary. The excess insurance, whether the local council auto or Scouting America general liability, is available only while the motor vehicle or watercraft is in the actual use of a Scouting unit and being used during an official Scouting activity.

The insurance provided to unregistered Scouting volunteers participating in an official Scouting activity through the general liability insurance program is excess over any other insurance the volunteer might have to their benefit, usually a homeowner, personal liability, motor vehicle (automobile), or watercraft policy.

The general liability policy does not provide indemnification or defense coverage to those individuals who commit intentional and criminal acts. Scouting America does not have an insurance policy that provides defense for situations involving

allegations of intentional and criminal acts.

Scouting youth are not insured under the general liability policy.

## **Automobile Liability Insurance**

Whether owned, non-owned, hired or leased, a liability insurance policy **MUST** cover all vehicles. The amount of this coverage must meet or exceed the insurance requirement of the state in which the vehicle is licensed. (It is recommended, however, that coverage limits are at least \$100,000 combined single limit.) Any vehicle carrying 10 or more passengers should have a limit of \$1 million single limits. All vehicles used in travel outside the United States must maintain a liability insurance policy that complies with or exceeds the requirements of that country.

Note: The use of 15-passenger vans manufactured before 2005 is prohibited.

## **Chartered Organizations for Scouting Units**

The general liability policy provides primary liability insurance coverage for all chartered organizations on file with Scouting America for liability arising out of their chartering a traditional Scouting unit. However, automobile and watercraft liability coverage is provided on a secondary or excess basis above driver or motor vehicle owner insurance and any other insurance available. All vehicles used in Scouting activities must be covered by automobile liability insurance with limits that meet or exceed the state's requirements in which the vehicle is licensed. The owner must insure all watercraft used in Scouting for liability exposures. The amount of coverage is determined by the size and usage of the boat; \$1 million is recommended.

Chartered organizations do not need a certificate of insurance. The chartered organization endorsement is a part of the insurance policy contract and is enforceable under the policy contract.

## **Accident and Sickness Coverage**

(Optional coverage for council or units)



Accident and sickness insurance (also known as accident and health insurance) coverage for Scouts and Scouters furnishes medical reimbursement within the policy amounts of death, accident, or sickness. These plans and policies are excess of all other available sources of medical insurance or other healthcare benefits. If there is no additional primary insurance or healthcare plan, these policies generally pay as primary coverage, subject to the plan limits and terms.

All registered youth and seasonal staff are eligible, as well as registered leaders and volunteer leaders.

The coverage provided has maximum limits it pays and a maximum benefit period, usually 52 weeks from the date of the incident. The plans do not “take care of everything.” Claims should be filed with the accident and sickness carrier as soon as possible, along with any other source of medical insurance or other health care benefits.

Scouts and guests who are being encouraged to become registered Scouts and volunteers are automatically insured while in attendance at a scheduled activity. Other guests are not covered. Each council also will be able to elect to cover family members of registered Scouts while these family members are in attendance at Scouting America sponsored events. This is optional coverage.

Accident and sickness plans and insurance companies have specific procedures for processing claims. Volunteers need to check with their local council to verify which plan/policy their council provides or is available.

## **Coverage for Non-Owned Boats Used in Scouting Activities**

Only general liability insurance coverage is available; no hull damage insurance is provided.

Owners (chartered organizations or others) must carry their own liability coverage. Boats under 26 feet and donated for Scouting activities need to have at least \$300,000 in coverage. Boats 26 feet and over should have \$500,000 in coverage. Risk Management will provide certificates of insurance up to \$2 million. Scouting America coverage is excess of the liability coverage (\$300,000 or \$500,000)

carried by the owner.

The following are examples of watercraft/boats that need not be insured by the chartered organization and others if they are to be used in an official Scouting activity: canoes, kayaks, rafts, catamarans, and sailboats (under 26 feet). However, suppose these watercraft are to be used for non-Scouting activities. In that case, the chartered organization or others should provide liability insurance as there is no liability coverage for chartered organizations or others for non-Scouting activities.

Watercraft owned by local councils, chartered organizations, and others should be licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard, and the operator should be licensed if required.

## **Prohibited Activities**

Scouting America general liability policy provides coverage for a bodily injury or property damage claim that is made and arises out of official Scouting activity. The Guide to Safe Scouting contains a listing of prohibited activities . Prohibited activities are not considered official Scouting activities. Volunteers (registered and unregistered), units, chartered organizations, and local councils jeopardize insurance coverage for themselves and their organization by engaging in prohibited activities.

Please do not put yourself at risk.

## Transportation

Getting to and from Scouting events is a risk for all participants and can lead to severe and even fatal accidents that impact the Scouting family. Please use the framework below in addition to the SAFE Transportation Checklist and Pre-Trip Inspection for all transportation to and from Scouting activities. The Scouter Code of Conduct includes: When transporting Scouts, I will obey all laws, comply with Youth Protection guidelines, and follow safe driving practices.

General guidelines are as follows:

- 1 It is essential to have safe and responsible transportation for all Scouting activities.
- 2 When possible, use public carriers—for example, trains, buses, and commercial airlines for group travel.
- 3 Drivers are expected to follow all applicable traffic laws and not drive if impaired or distracted—for example texting, while driving.
- 4 All drivers must have a valid driver's license that has not been suspended or revoked, including a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) when required.
- 5 Youth drivers are prohibited. Must be 18 years of age or older.
- 6 Must meet Scouting's Barriers to Abuse Supervision requirements, including two-deep leadership and no one-on-one during transportation. See this [FAQ](#) .
- 7 Driving time is limited to a maximum of 10 hours in one 24-hour period, regardless of drivers available. Frequent breaks are required, including rest, food, and recreation. Do not drive when distracted or drowsy.
- 8 The use of private aviation for transportation is prohibited.
- 9 Motor vehicles used to transport Scouts must complete Pre-Trip Transportation Inspection before travel. This includes correcting all deficiencies.

- 10 All occupants must wear factory-installed seatbelts. This includes the use of appropriate car seats for youth.
- 11 Transportation of passengers in a pickup or truck bed, recreational camper or towed trailer is prohibited. See limited exception for parade and hayrides.
- 12 The use of 15-passenger vans manufactured before 2005 is prohibited.
- 13 All vehicles must be covered by automobile liability insurance with limits that meet or exceed the requirements of the state in which the vehicle is licensed. It is recommended, however, that coverage limits are at least \$100,000 combined single limit. Any vehicle designed to carry ten or more passengers should have limit of \$1,000,000. For insurance information refer to the Insurance section in the Guide to Safe Scouting .
- 14 When towing the tow vehicle driver has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate the vehicle with the attached unit.
- 15 Except for council-run ATV programs, All Terrain Vehicles (ATV), Golf Carts, Light Transport Vehicles (LTV's), Utility Transport Vehicles (UTVs), and side-by-sides are banned from program use. This prohibition includes their use at the unit level. NCAP Standard FA-711 provides a standard by which councils and camps may use this equipment.

## Winter Activities

### Winter Camping Safety

There is magic to camping in winter. It is one of the most challenging of outdoor adventures. Scouting America operates the National Cold-Weather Camping Development Center at Northern Tier through the Okpik program. Special considerations for winter camping are:

- 1 **Qualified Supervision.** It is vital that a leader be an experienced winter camper with strong character and common sense.
- 2 **Equipment .** Be completely outfitted for cold weather. Equipment should be checked to ensure good condition for the activity and proper maintenance while in use. Youth should be adequately clothed, and blankets should be a suitable quality and weight.
- 3 **Physical Fitness .** Youth should be suitably fit for the activity. Periodic rests while building snow caves and engaging in other strenuous cold-weather activities will help prevent accidents and overheating.
- 4 **Buddy System .** Having Youth paired aids in monitoring each other's physical condition and observation of surroundings and circumstances.
- 5 **Planning .** Safe activities follow a plan that has been conscientiously developed. In winter, plan to cover no more than 5 miles per day on snowshoes or 10 to 12 miles on cross-country skis. Allow ample time to make it to camp at the end of the day.
- 6 **Safe Area .** Leaders should determine whether an area for winter camping is well-suited and free of hazards.
- 7 **Weather Check .** Weather conditions, potential hazards, and the appropriate responses should be understood and anticipated. Go to [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org) for Hazardous Weather training.

- 8 **Burning** . Never use flames in tents, teepees, or snow shelters. This includes burning any solid, liquid, gel, or gas fuel; using features of tents or teepees that support stoves or fires; and use of chemical-fueled equipment and catalytic heaters.
- 9 **Discipline** . Rules are effective only when followed. All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for a safe winter camping experience. Applicable rules should be discussed prior to the outing and reviewed for all participants when leaving for the winter campout.

## **Winter Sports Safety**

Beyond camping, a number of cold-weather activities present challenges to the youth and leader, such as cross-country skiing, ice skating, sledding, ice fishing, and snowshoeing. Essential ingredients for fun include skill training and an awareness of the hazards unique to these activities. Snow conditions, hazardous terrain, special clothing needs, and emergency survival are important issues for a safe and successful experience.

Be sure your winter outdoor activities always follow these guidelines:

- 1 All winter activities must be supervised by mature and conscientious adults (at least one of whom must be age 21 or older) who understand and knowingly accept responsibility for the well-being and safety of the youth in their care, who are experienced and qualified in the particular skills and equipment involved in the activity, and who are committed to compliance with the seven points of Scouting America Winter Sports Safety. Direct supervision should be maintained at all times by two or more adults when youth are in the field. The appropriate number of supervisors will increase depending on the number of participants, the type of activity, and environmental conditions.
- 2 Winter sports activities embody intrinsic hazards that vary from sport to sport. Participants should be aware of the potential hazards of any winter sport before engaging in it. Leaders should emphasize preventing accidents through adherence to safety measures and proper technique.

- 3 Appropriate personal protective equipment is required for all activities. This includes the recommended use of helmets for all participants engaged in winter sports, such as sledding and riding other sliding devices. The use of helmets is required for the following activities: downhill skiing, snowboarding.
- 4 Winter sports activities often place greater demands on a participant's cardiopulmonary system, and people with underlying medical conditions (especially if the heart or lungs are involved) should not participate without medical consultation and direction. For participants without underlying medical conditions, the annual health history and physical examination by a licensed health-care practitioner every year is sufficient. The adult leader should be familiar with the physical circumstances of each youth participant and make appropriate adjustments to the activity or provide protection as warranted by individual health or physical conditions. Adults participating in strenuous outdoor winter activity should have an annual physical examination. It is recommended that the medical assessment be performed by a licensed health-care practitioner knowledgeable of the sport and the particular physical demands the activity will place on the individual.
- 5 For winter sports such as skiing, snowboarding, etc., that utilize specialized equipment, it is essential that all equipment fit and function properly.
- 6 When youth are engaging in downhill activities such as sledding or tobogganing, minimize the likelihood of collision with immobile obstacles. Use only designated areas where rocks, tree stumps, and other potential obstacles have been identified and marked, cleared away, shielded, or buffered in some way.
- 7 All participants should know, understand, and respect the rules and procedures for safe winter activity. The applicable rules should be presented and learned before the outing, and all participants should review them just before the activity begins. When youth know and understand the reasons for the rules, they will observe them. When fairly and impartially applied, rules do not interfere with fun. Rules for safety, plus common sense and good judgment, keep the fun from being interrupted by tragedy.

## **Animal and Insect Hazards**

Much of Scouting occurs in the out of doors where we are the visitors and the animals, insects, and other creatures are at home. The following guidance will help protect us from infections and other risks that we can encounter and that may lead to serious illness.

### **Be Aware**

Know what risks are possible. Mosquitos, ticks, mammals, and other creatures can spread disease to people. The CDC has detailed information on animal and insect/arachnid risks and what you can do to help prevent them.

Know the area you will be visiting. Is it wooded? Near a swamp? Known to have a high population of deer, raccoons, or bats? Has it been populated with mice and rats that may have left behind a virus or bacteria in fleas or feces? Each environment has its own potential concerns. Learn about an area before you leave for a campout or trek. Landowners, rangers, and other sources can be used to learn of risks before arrival. Reminding youth to be mindful of warning signs posted in hazardous areas is an important aspect of a safety minute on arrival.

Know that many animals and insects spread diseases that may not produce immediate symptoms. Parents and guardians should be aware of possible exposures before and after an event when youth are at risk. Encourage and teach avoidance of all wild animals. This can also mean domesticated animals that are not familiar.

### **Be Prepared**

Know the area you will be visiting. Is it swampy or filled with dense underbrush? For example, avoid camping around lowlands during the wet season. Because it may not be possible to change a reserved site at a campground or other environment, preparation and prevention are critical.



Bring repellents and netting, and set good policy around checking for ticks and bites. Make sure repellents are used and reapplied.

Avoid places where rodents have been living. If cleaning an area or enclosure (cabin, hut, etc.), be prepared by making sure qualified personnel and proper personal protective equipment are used.

## **CDC Animal and Insect Hazard Resources**

- Tick information
- Rabies information

## **Incident Reporting**

Timely, clear, concise, and complete incident reports allow for an appropriate response and an opportunity for analysis while promoting continuous improvement of our programs.

You can now report accidents, near misses, and membership infraction incidents to your local council or enter them yourself at [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/incident-report) .

## **Exploring Program**

Safety First guidelines are the program safety material for Exploring.

<https://www.exploring.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/LFL-safety-first-guidelines-3.21.17-interim-revision-8.4.25.pdf>