Reminders for Outings

The Boy Scouts of America has an outstanding record in providing for the physical well-being of its members. Fitness is one of four key objectives. All Scouting outdoor activities must meet rigorous standards of health, safety, and program. Continued vigilance is necessary to ensure that youth have high-quality outdoor experiences that do not expose them to unnecessary risks. On outings, the adult leader assumes responsibility for the health and safety of the members in the group.

These points are to remind you of some of the major items necessary to achieve high standards of health and safety. Many of these items should be assumed by the unit committee or delegated to assistant leaders, the unit leadership corps, or even to individual youth members as they become increasingly proficient in outdoor skills. When you, the other leaders, and your unit committee prepare for your next outing, review this list and decide who will be responsible for each item.

Once a Year

- Each member must have a current health history and a medical inspection (No. 34414 within three years or, for highadventure activities and adults over 40 years of age, form No. 34412, required annually) by a licensed health-care practitioner, so that you will be aware of any special medical needs and be prepared to deal with them.
- Recommend that each participant have adequate health and accident insurance. Make sure parents are informed of this need.
- Arrange for survival training, including seven priorities: (1) the will to live-keeping calm, (2) shelter, (3) fire, (4) rest, (5) signaling device, (6) water, (7) food. Explain what to do if lost. Instruct the group on using a compass and topographic maps. See the Emergency Survival handbook, No. 33551.

Before Going

- Provide adequate adult leadership (age 21 or over) for the group considering the number of youth participants, their age, their training for and experience with the type of activity being undertaken, and the degree of difficulty of the outing. Maintain a minimum ratio of one adult per ten youths. Each group must have at least two adults. Observe the safety rule of four: No fewer than four individuals (always with a minimum of two adults) go on any backcountry expedition or campout. .
- Submit application for Local Tour Permit, No. 34426, or National Tour Permit (over 500 miles), No. 34419, to your local council service center. The provisions in the tour permit must be followed.
- Know the area or arrange to go with someone who does. Always check out the area well in advance of the outing.
- Be sure someone in the group has first aid training, especially in hypothermia, hyperthermia, dehydration, heat problems, blisters, frostbite, hyperventilation, acute mountain (altitude) sickness, insect stings, and CPR.
- Get written parental/guardian informed consent for each youth participant for adventurous outings that may involve a degree of risk. Be sure parents understand what the risks are and what precautions are being taken.

- Develop a program geared to the abilities and experience of the group. See the Boy Scout Handbook, No. 33229, Fieldbook, No. 33200, or Explorer Leader Handbook, No. 34637.

- Using a current health history form, Class 3, check to be sure everyone is physically fit-no colds, serious allergy problems, etc. If a trek will be strenuous (most are), conduct pretrek training to get everyone in shape.

- Establish procedures for emergencieshigh winds, heavy snow, flooding, missing persons. Search only the immediate area for missing persons-contact appropriate authorities if a more extensive search is needed.

- Let parents know where you are going, when you will leave, where you will leave vehicles, when you expect to return, and whom to contact for emergencies. Establish an emergency contact with a responsible adult in the group's home community and specify times when an adult on the outing will check in.

- Make sure every person is properly clothed, especially footwear and headgear, for all possible weather conditions.

- Leave pets at home.

- Fireworks are never allowed.

- Be alert to weather conditions. Develop an alternate plan for severe weather.

- For high--adventure activities such as a whitewater trip or caving expedition, appoint someone whom the group leader will call once the group is "off trail" so that parents will feel comfortable, and as a safety precaution.

On the Trail

- Keep the group together. Use the rule of four: No fewer than four persons hike or canoe together. If one becomes ill or injured, one administers first aid while two go for help.

- Avoid hiking along highways, but if you must, hike against the traffic in single file well off the pavement. Wear highly visible clothing.

- Recognize the difference between difficult and dangerous areas and bypass the dangerous entirely. Attempt activities involving a degree of risk (whitewater, rock climbing, etc.) only if equipment, ability, training, and accessibility to the area are commensurate with the degree of difficulty. Carefully check an entire whitewater course before attempting it. Portage canoes if unsure. Know the limits of your group and when to turn back.

- Always use the buddy system-on the trail, while traveling, in boats or canoes, and especially for treks into remote areas and winter camping-to maintain alertness to potential medical problems, as well as to keep track of everyone. Hold periodic buddy checks.

- See that everyone maintains an adequate intake of liquids and food.

- Avoid lightning, swollen streams, rapids, traveling at night, etc. Stay away from peaks, ridges, and open fields when hiking or backpacking. Stay near the shoreline when boating or canoeing.

In Camp

- Select campsites that are protected from high winds, lightning, flash floods, cliffs, falling rocks, and dead limbs or trees, and areas that are free of poisonous plants. Take adequate measures to avoid insects (flies, ants, mosquitoes), ticks, etc.
- Use treated water, or purify untreated water. Avoid water in stagnant pools or ponds or in heavily polluted streams.
- Permit no flame of any type to be used inside or near any type of tent, whether flame-resistant or otherwise. Pitch tents at least 30 feet from any fire.
- Using liquid-fuel storms or lanterns requires supervision by an experienced adult, with proper safeguards for transportation and refueling.
- Have a fire plan ready to use if a fire occurs. Appoint fireguards and rotate this duty daily. Never leave a fire unattended.
- Provide a means for keeping perishable foods cold.
- All pots, dishes, and utensils must be scraped clean, thoroughly washed in warm soapy water, and rinsed in hot water with a sanitizing agent added.
- Use a cathole or straddle trench latrine located at least 200 feet from any water source-spring, lake, stream, etc. Cover fecal matter with dirt after each use and completely close hole before departing, or pack it out if required by the administering agency.
- See that everyone maintains personal cleanliness. If showers are not available, participants should take periodic sponge baths. Encourage everyone to brush teeth at least once daily. .
- Plan activities to avoid horseplay-most injuries in camp are related to careless, unplanned activity. Report any serious accident to your council service center. Schedule nine to ten hours of sleep between taps and reveille and see that quiet is maintained during this period.
- Show respect for the wild outdoors. Use "Leave No Trace techniques.
- Use the Safe Swim Defense for all swimming. Use Safety Afloat for all outings when watercraft are used.
- Make sure fires are dead out. Sprinkle coals with water and stir them-repeat as many times as necessary. Use the "coldout" test by having someone run a bare hand through extinguished coals and ashes. Place crossed sticks over a fire lay to indicate that the fire was left dead out.

At Conclusion of Trek

- Check in when returning; let contact person know you have returned.
- Remove, store, or distribute food packages from packs, especially opened ones.
- Clean and/or dry equipment and store it properly.
- At least two adults remain at the pickup point until all youths have been picked up.
- Write thank-you letters to land managers, landowners, and others who extended courtesies.