

Planning and Conducting a Safe Scout Outing

Training Summary

Safe Scouting can happen if you follow the Scout motto—Be Prepared. This unit of supplementary training will describe how to plan for and conduct a safe Scout outing.

Time Required

60 minutes

Target Audience

- Scoutmasters and assistant Scoutmasters
- Troop committee members and other adult troop leaders

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, participants will be able to

- Create a plan for a safe Scout outing.
- Implement the plan during a Scout outing.
- Understand the resources available for planning and conducting a safe Scout outing.

Training Format

- Small-group discussion or lecture, personal coaching, or self-study

Required Materials

- Flip chart and markers
- Pocket-sized notebook and pen or pencil for each participant
- Our Pledge of Performance handout
- Local Tour Permit, No. 34426
- National Tour Permit, No. 4419
- The Informed Consent Agreement (parent/guardian permission slip)
- Personal Health and Medical Record—Class 1 and 2
- Personal Health and Medical Record—Class 3

Training Resources

- Guide to Safe Scouting
- Safe Swim Defense, No. 34370
- Safety Afloat, No. 34368
- Climb On Safely, No 20-099
- Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation (BALOO), No. 34162
- Tours and Expeditions, No. 33737
- Wilderness Use Policy, No. 20-121
- Principles of Leave No Trace, No. 21-105
- Leave No Trace Training Outline, No. 20-113

Planning and Conducting a Safe Scout Outing

The training includes best practices for planning a safe Scouting event and covers safety issues that will crop up during an event (including vehicle, activity, and weather safety).

Planning for the Safe Trip and Scout Outing

Tour Permits

Tour permits are an essential part of the safe Scout outing planning process.

The Local Tour Permit is used for trips of less than 500 miles and lets the local council know where your trip will be taking place. It describes activity training standards required for activities such as swimming, boating, or climbing. It explains the requirements for transportation and leadership training.

The tour leader signs the application, indicating that he or she has read the Guide to Safe Scouting.

The Local Tour Permit includes spaces for officials at facilities visited to sign indicating that cooperation and conduct were satisfactory, as well as vehicle insurance section to be completed for each vehicle used. There is a section outlining transportation requirements (required speeds and licensing). Lastly, the tour permit includes “Our Pledge of Performance,” which covers best practices for a Scout outing.

True stories that shed light on some points of this pledge follow. You are encouraged to contribute anecdotes of your own, and to contribute them for inclusion in future versions of this training. (Send them to supplementaltraining@netbsa.org.)

Point 3: Reasonable Travel Speed and Using Safe Vehicles

Example 1: *A van was traveling at an unsafe rate of speed on an interstate highway, weaving in and out of lanes of traffic. The van driver lost control of his vehicle, which spun in a circle and came to a stop facing oncoming traffic.*

A Scouter driving below the speed limit saw the problem as it developed and was prepared to avoid a collision by leaving the highway onto the grassy median strip.

There was time to react because the safe interval rule was followed—leave at least one car length between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you for every 10 miles per hour speed. At 50 miles per hour speed, for example, this means leave at least five car lengths between you and the car in front.

There was a safe exit plan. In case of a problem there was a grassy median strip available to enter to get away from the dangerous situation on the highway.

Example 2: *On a very cold day, icy conditions on the road made driving extremely dangerous. The operator of a sport utility vehicle lost traction at 20 miles per hour and slid into the lane of oncoming traffic. The driver aimed the wheels of the SUV in the direction of the skid, regained control of the vehicle, and drove off the road out of the way of oncoming traffic.*

Safe driving speed depends greatly on road conditions and that unsafe situations can occur even at slow rates of speed. It also shows that control of a vehicle in a skid can be regained by turning the wheels in the direction of the skid.

Point 4: Fires Attended at All Times

***Example 1:** A person burning trash in a steel barrel poured water on the fire to put it out, then assumed that the heavy barrel was safe to leave.*

The weather shifted unpredictably and strong winds came up, blowing the barrel over. Some hot coals remained in the bottom of the barrel, and they spilled onto dry grass and started a grass fire. The local fire department put out the grass fire, but not before a boat on an adjacent property was damaged.

The safety error made was to assume that the heavy steel barrel had no way of being tipped over and that there was no need to be absolutely certain that the fire embers were completely extinguished.

***Example 2:** A Scout wanted to help his campfire along and poured some fuel from a container onto the fire. The fuel caught fire and burned back in midair, singeing the Scout's arm. The Scout knew to remove the source of the fuel (he dropped the can) and to remove the source of the air feeding the fire (he dropped to the ground and rolled his arm in the dirt). He applied first aid for the burns on the arm, including applying ice packs to reduce pain and swelling and to promote healing.*

Point 7: Clean and Sanitary Camp

***Example:** Sanitation in camping must not be taken for granted. The safety of water is of particular importance. In 1993 in Wisconsin, for example, an outbreak of cryptosporidium and giardia infection caused severe gastrointestinal disorders, affecting 400,000 people and leading to 60 deaths.*

Water must be made safe to drink by filtration and chemical treatment.

When the Local Tour Permit is completed, send it to your local council office for approval. Allow the office about two weeks for approval.

The Local Tour Permit is an essential and valuable document for planning a Scout outing. Every adult leader and Scout should have a copy of this permit to study so that the obligations undertaken are well understood.

The National Tour Permit is used for trips 500 miles or more (one-way). It is similar to the Local Tour Permit in that it is sent to your local council and then to the BSA regional office for approval, so leave adequate lead time—at least a month—in submitting the application.

The National Tour Permit has space for the following information.

- Leadership and personnel information
- Transportation requirements (driver's licensing and insurance)

- A copy of the itinerary
- An application for an International Letter of Introduction (where desired)

The National Tour Permit describes BSA requirements for health, safety, aquatics, climbing/rappelling, sanitation, wilderness use, and Youth Protection training. The group leader is required to have a copy of the Guide to Safe Scouting and to sign that it has been read.

Both the Local and National Tour Permits are valuable planning and safety tools. Each of these permits refers to other BSA documents that discuss safety training:

- Safe Swim Defense
- Safety Afloat
- Climb On Safely
- Basic Adult Leader Outdoor Orientation (BALOO)
- Tours and Expeditions
- Wilderness Use Policy
- Principles of Leave No Trace
- Leave No Trace Training Outline

Introduction to the Guide to Safe Scouting

Every Scout leader should be familiar with the contents of the Guide to Safe Scouting. Planning for a safe Scouting event is a big responsibility and requires a big guide!

Topics included in this guide include

1. Youth Protection and Adult Leadership
2. Aquatics Safety
3. Camping
4. Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Use and Abuse
5. Emergency Preparedness
6. First Aid
7. Fuels and Fire Prevention
8. Guns and Firearms
9. Sports and Activities
10. Inspections
11. Medical Information
12. Transportation
13. Winter Activities

The Guide to Safe Scouting is revised every year. Be sure that you are using the most current version. Remember—both the Local and National Tour Permits require that the adult leader certify that this guide is in his possession and has been read.

Two-Deep Leadership

Safe Scouting requires adequate adult leadership. For camps, trips, and outdoor activities, this means having at least two adult leaders, one of whom is at least 21 years old. It is unacceptable to have a camp, trip, or outdoor activity with only one adult present. If only one adult is able to attend, the trip must be cancelled. Ideally, at least three adults will accompany the troop on

Scouting on trips. (Note that for properly trained Boy Scout patrols, it is acceptable to have outdoor patrol activities with no adults present. Such activities do require Scoutmaster approval.)

Planning Basics

To plan and conduct a safe and successful Scouting activity you must ask and answer these basic questions:

- **Who** is going?
- **What** is the purpose of the activity?
- **Where** is the group going?
- **When** will events be accomplished?
- **How** will the transportation to and events at the Scout activity be accomplished?

As you work your way through the detailed answers to these questions, refer to the Guide to Safe Scouting for answers on how to be safe from start to finish of the event.

The patrol method is used in successful Boy Scouting. Use it here to see that your Boy Scouting is safe Scouting. The patrol leader's council and individual Scout patrol members should be actively involved in planning for safety in Scouting events.

Permission Slips and Medical Forms

The Informed Consent Agreement (parent/guardian permission slip) is available on the BSA Web site, as are the two Personal Health and Medical Record Forms—Class 1 and 2 and Class 3.

Study these forms closely to understand their purpose in identifying potential problem areas. See that these forms are used and available to adult Scouters during the course of an activity.

You should have a separate permission slip for each Scout for each activity and an updated medical form each year. Get medical forms for adults, too, as adults can have medical conditions occur on outdoor activities. Be sure to keep these medical forms private and use them only on a need-to-know basis. Troop leadership should review the medical forms of Scouts and leaders to ensure that they are prepared to handle situations which might arise.

Guidelines for Safe Transportation to and from the Outing (Vehicle Safety)

Drive safely!

Some best practices for vehicle safety include:

- Have each vehicle checked for safe operating condition, including tires with good tread and correct air pressure levels, correct level of lubricants and coolant, safe spare tire and jack, emergency supplies of food and water, and a mobile phone or portable citizens band radio.
- Have each driver clearly understand the route plan. A safe route plan will allow adequate time to drive to and from the starting and pickup points during hours of good visibility.
- Have each driver understand the principles of safe defensive driving. These include keeping at least one car length between the driver and the car ahead of him for each 10 miles per hour speed and to have an escape route planned to avoid accidents that may appear ahead.
- The completion of a safe driving course and careful study of state driver's license manuals are highly recommended.

- Ideally, there will be at least two adults in each car. As a minimum, unless they are parent and child, there must never be one adult and one Scout in a car.
- Be sure to observe the guidelines on travel times on the tour permit. The best plan for safety is to have drivers take turns driving so that while one person is driving the other person can be resting. Be sure to take rest stops.

Safety During the Outing

To be safe during a Scout outing, study carefully the safety issues that you may encounter for the kind of Scout activity you are planning. The Guide to Safe Scouting has extensive information on general Scout safety topics.

Here are some points to consider.

1. Know the area where you are going. Be prepared—Know where water will be available. Know where you are by noting landmarks and using navigational aids such as GPS tools and map and compass.
2. Know the special medical needs of any participant (such as diabetes medications) so that you can be alert to needs being met on a timely basis.

Everyone should be trained in how to recognize and deal with cardiac issues if they happen. Have medical forms available with current contact information for each boy. (It does little good to have a home number if no one is at home.)

3. Safety in hiking requires that you know where you are stepping. You should step without putting all your weight down until you are sure of your footing. A sprained ankle, torn ligament, or broken bone can be avoided by taking care with your footing. A walking stick can be valuable for safe hiking.

Safety in hiking requires that you know where you are and can safely find your way back. The backward-look method of navigation is simple and effective. Look back while hiking to recognize the landmarks you will need for your return trip.

4. Use the buddy system. This system is well-known in the Scout Safe Swim Defense plan but is useful in all Scout activities. In brief, each Scout has another Scout as his “buddy.” Each Scout then looks out for the other Scout. In high-adventure hiking, for example, a Scout may spot a need of his buddy Scout (backpack coming untied, for example) that he can then share with his buddy.”

The buddy system is of particular value for spotting emerging physical well-being issues, such as heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

5. Be safe in bear country. Bears are attracted by “smellables,” so a basic rule in avoiding bears is either to avoid taking items on a trip that they like to smell or, if the item is necessary, to keep it in a tightly sealed container.

Here is a bear story that occurred recently in Pennsylvania.

A group of campers stored food in their tent. A bear was attracted by the smell of the food in the tent. When one camper returned to the tent, the bear attacked her. The camper was severely wounded and had to be evacuated. The hospital treated scratch marks on the back, a puncture wound to the leg, and bites on the back of the head.

This could have been avoided if the food had been contained in sealed containers and stored outside of the tent.

6. Weather is a major factor in conducting a safe Scout outing. It can be a tough decision to cancel a trip (either before or during the event) if the weather turns bad. Remember that the overriding concern is the Scouts' safety. You must let responsible persons know where you are heading so you can be located if trouble develops.

Weather can change with drastic suddenness. Even if you have checked the latest weather reports, both for short-term and longer-term outlooks, you must be prepared to deal with unusual cold, often due to extreme wind gusts, or unusual heat.

The ability to stay warm in cold weather will depend on adequate shelter, layered clothing, and a reliable heat source. In cold weather, survival depends on warm, nutritious food and beverages.

In warm weather survival depends on not overheating and replacing fluids and salts lost through sweating. You must have plenty of fresh water as well as salt tablets. If water is found along the way, it must be treated before it can be considered safe to drink. Nutritious drink mixes can be valuable to keep hydrated and to replace salts lost through sweating.

Lightning can be dangerous. During a storm, take shelter in a place that is insulated from lightning. Stay away from metal objects. A complete list of precautions is found in the Guide to Safe Scouting in the Lightning section.

Here is a story about a Scout group's encounter with lightning.

A backpacking group was overtaken by a summer thunderstorm on a ridge line. They removed their packs, took their rain gear and ground pads, got off the ridge line and waited for the storm to pass. When they returned to their packs, they found that lightning had struck one of the packs. Water in a canteen turned into steam and exploded the canteen. The aluminum pieces then went through clothing and a sleeping bag. No one was injured because the group got off the ridge line and away from the place where lightning was likely to strike.

Here are two stories about storm safety at Scout camporees:

A severe thunderstorm headed directly toward a camporee. The Scouts were camped in an open field with few trees. One of the trees was hit by lightning, and several units lost tents and dining flies. No one was seriously injured, although a few Scouts had minor injuries from having their tents fall on them. Someone should have been following the weather, and a decision should have been taken to move the Scouts to a safer location.

Severe weather threatened a camporee, but the leadership was prepared. The boys were quickly rounded up and taken to a building, where a longtime Scouter put on an impromptu skit and song evening. Several tents and dining flies were lost and at least one unit had to go home because their equipment was damaged, but the Scouts were safe.

7. Trees are heavy objects and occasionally fall unexpectedly if their root structure fails. Always inspect trees before pitching tents or conducting activities near them. Review safety procedures for tree cutting with ax and saw. A downed tree is a heavy object, so take precautions that you are not standing near or on a downed tree as it may roll and move unpredictably.

8. Take care of yourself as an adult leader. Your physical condition and well-being are extremely important. Your Scouts have tremendous energy, but their energy can run out quickly. Set a good example for the Scouts, but don't feel that your needs must come last. Remember that if something happens, YOU are the one whose strength, endurance, and good judgment will make the difference. Get plenty of sleep, and keep yourself well-fed and hydrated. When possible, take naps if the Scouts have kept you awake.

Hands-On Participation

Ask participants to provide examples from their own experience to illustrate the points covered throughout the training.

Conclusion

The objective of any Scout outing is to develop character, citizenship, and fitness. The Scout Oath and the Scout Law are valuable life principles that can contribute to safety in a Scout outing. Safety is an important part of Scouting and must be an essential part of all outdoor skills instruction. This training has outlined key points that will help you plan and conduct a safe Scout outing.

Each of the resources below has valuable information on safe Scouting, and you are encouraged to study each of them.

- [Guide to Safe Scouting](http://www.scouting.org/pubs/gss/toc.html) [[<http://www.scouting.org/pubs/gss/toc.html>]]
- [Wilderness First Aid](http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/issues/0203/a-wild.html) [[<http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/issues/0203/a-wild.html>]]
- [Fire Safety](http://www.scouting.org/nav/enter.jsp?s=xx&c=ds&terms=safety&x=17&y=13) [[<http://www.scouting.org/nav/enter.jsp?s=xx&c=ds&terms=safety&x=17&y=13>]]
- [Fire Safety and Leave No Trace](http://www.scouting.org/boyscouts/resources/21-117/035_minimize.html) [[http://www.scouting.org/boyscouts/resources/21-117/035_minimize.html]]
- [BSA Emergency Preparedness Plan, Kit, and Award](http://www.scouting.org/pubs/emergency/index.html) [[<http://www.scouting.org/pubs/emergency/index.html>]]
- [BSA Ready and Prepared Award](http://www.scouting.org/awards/10-278/index.html) [[<http://www.scouting.org/awards/10-278/index.html>]]
- [Safety Training in Scouting](http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/issues/9809/d-news.html) [[<http://www.scoutingmagazine.org/issues/9809/d-news.html>]]
- [Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat](http://www.scouting.org/pubs/aquatics/index2.html) [[<http://www.scouting.org/pubs/aquatics/index2.html>]]

Updated January 2006.

Our Pledge of Performance

1. We will use the Safe Swim Defense in any swimming activity, Safety Afloat in all craft activity on the water, and Climb On Safely for climbing activity.
2. We will use trucks only for transporting equipment—no passengers except in the cab. All passenger cars, station wagons, recreational vehicles, and cabs of trucks will have a seat belt for each passenger.
3. We agree to enforce reasonable travel speed (in accordance with national, state, and local laws) and use only vehicles that are in safe mechanical condition.
4. We will be certain that fires are attended at all times.
5. We will apply for a fire permit from local authorities in all areas where it is required.
6. We will at all times be a credit to the Boy Scouts of America and will not tolerate rowdyism or un-Scoutlike conduct, keeping a constant check on all members of our group.
7. We will maintain high standards of personal cleanliness and orderliness and will operate a clean and sanitary camp, leaving it in a better condition than we found it.
8. We will not litter or bury any trash, garbage, or tin cans. All rubbish that cannot be burned will be placed in a tote-litter bag and taken to the nearest recognized trash disposal or all the way home, if necessary.
9. We will not deface trees, restrooms, or other objects with initials or writing.
10. We will respect the property of others and will not trespass.
11. We will not cut standing trees or shrubs without specific permission from the landowner or manager.
12. We will collect only souvenirs that are gifts to us or that we purchase.
13. We will pay our own way and not expect concessions or entertainment from any individual or group.
14. We will provide every member of our party an opportunity to attend religious services on the Sabbath.
15. We will observe the courtesy to write thank-you notes to persons who assisted us on our trip.
16. We will, in case of backcountry expedition, read and abide by the Wilderness Use Policy of the BSA.
17. We will notify, in case of serious trouble, our local council service center, our parents, or other local contact.
18. If more than one vehicle is used to transport our group, we will establish Rendezvous points at the start of each day and not attempt to have drivers closely follow the group vehicle in front of them.