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Trek Safely Training Outline

Trek Safely is the Boy Scouts of America's recommended procedure for organizing and carrying out outdoor treks that involve Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers. Trek Safely applies to all types of outdoor experiences that involve trekking, including hiking, backpacking, canoeing, horseback riding, caving, rafting, kayaking, sailing, ski touring, mountain climbing, and mountain biking.

Purpose

Trek Safely is designed to help youth and adult leaders plan and carry out a safe trekking experience for the members of their unit. Similar to Safe Swim Defense, Safety Afloat, and Climb On Safely, it is not designed to teach the skills of trekking. Units that choose to engage in activities requiring specialized outdoor skills should seek qualified instructors to help members learn and acquire these skills prior to the outing.

Trainer Qualifications

Training in Trek Safely should be conducted by a skilled trainer who has had some trekking experience. Because Trek Safely is not designed to teach skills, the trainer need not have a high degree of skill with any type of trek.

Training Location

Trek Safely training may be conducted at a roundtable, summer camp, camporee, or any other occasion where youth and adult leaders are present. Ideally, at least one youth leader and one adult leader from each unit can participate in this training together. This training may be conducted in conjunction with any BSA training for Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or Venturing leaders and can be offered with any other supplemental training program or roundtable.

The training takes about 40 minutes. The training instructor should use the following Trek Safely text as a resource.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this session, each participant should be able to

- Explain how each of the seven points of Trek Safely contributes to the objective of assuring safe treks.
- Understand why the first and last points—qualified supervision and discipline—are crucial and why all other points rely on these two points.

- Plan and carry out a safe unit trek, observing the seven points of Trek Safely.
- List the resources available for planning and safely carrying out a trek.

Training Aids and Resources

- *Passport to High Adventure*, No. 4310
- Passport to High Adventure Training Outline, No. 18-075
- *Backpacking* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33232
- *Camping* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33256
- *Canoeing* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33305
- *Cycling* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33226
- *Hiking* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33407
- *Horsemanship* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33298
- *Small-Boat Sailing* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33356
- *Swimming* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33352
- *Whitewater* merit badge pamphlet, No. 33405
- *Fieldbook*, No. 33104
- Personal Health and Medical Record Forms—Class 1 and Class 2, No. 34414; and Class 3, No. 34412

The Problem

Ask participants to relate their personal experiences with an accident or close call during a unit trek. Supplement their accounts with examples of actual incidents (news items, personal experiences, reports, etc.). Conclude the opening session by pointing out ways in which these incidents could have been avoided.

The Response

Scouting is responsible to provide for the safety of all trek participants. Trek Safely is designed to promote safety and help prevent accidents. Accidents occur when Trek Safely procedures are not followed.

The Policy

Explain that before any BSA group engages in a trekking experience, youth and adult leaders for the activity should have an appreciation for the potential hazards they might encounter and should be sure steps are taken to reduce risks. Adherence to the seven points of Trek Safely will help units avoid most significant risks.

Distribute a copy of the Trek Safely flier, No. 20-125, to each participant. Explain that you will review each of the seven points.

BSA Youth Protection. Adult leaders should comply with their local council's youth protection procedures before participating in any Scouting event or activity involving youth members. Your local council has materials about this training.

Qualified Supervision

Ask participants to note the first and last points of the plan—qualified supervision and discipline. These are crucial points of Trek Safely because all other points depend upon them.

All treks must be supervised by a mature, conscientious adult at least 21 years of age who accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of everyone in the group. At least one additional adult must accompany the unit. The lead adult is responsible for ensuring that someone in the group is currently trained in first aid. American Red Cross Wilderness First Aid Basic, a 16-hour course that includes CPR, is recommended.

Keep Fit

Participants need to have a Personal Health and Medical Record—Class 2 or Class 3 for any trek lasting longer than 72 hours. Point out that when accidents occur, they are frequently related to unknown physical conditions or are the unexpected result of some known physical problem. The lead adult should review the medical record for each participant and adjust the trek and activities to reduce potential risks associated with individual health conditions. Good safety requires an understanding of the risk of individual health conditions.

A regular fitness regimen is recommended. Participants should start slowly, gradually increasing the duration and intensity of exercise.

Plan Ahead

The trek should match the maturity, skill level, and fitness of unit members. Permits must be obtained to use public or private land. Training in the principles of Leave No Trace is essential for both safety and consideration of other visitors to the area.

Gear Up

A qualified youth or adult leader ensures that the group has the proper equipment and clothing for the trek. Every crew must have a first-aid kit and the means to carry and treat water. The leader reminds everyone to bring and take prescribed medications.

Crew members should be trained to use specialized equipment such as climbing gear, bridles, watercraft, and skiing gear.

Communicate Clearly and Completely

All participants should know what to expect and what is expected of them. Youth and adult leaders should communicate with each other to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Details of the itinerary should be shared with parents and a designated contact person. If the itinerary is changed, one of the leaders shares the change with the contact person who, in turn, shares it with parents. One of the trek leaders should consider carrying a means of electronic communication in case of an emergency.

Monitor Conditions

The leaders are responsible for making good decisions during the trek. They continually assess

conditions including weather, terrain, group morale, food and water supplies, and group physical condition. If adverse conditions develop, the group is prepared to stop or turn back.

Discipline

Each participant knows, understands, and respects the rules and procedures for safe trekking and has been oriented in Trek Safely. The reasons, as well as the rules and procedures, should be shared to encourage compliance. Youth and adult leaders must be strict and firm, showing no favoritism.

Ask if there are any questions and respond to them or seek the correct answer from a knowledgeable person.

Point out that the lead adult must ensure that someone in the group is currently trained in first aid. A higher level of certification such as first responder, emergency medical technician (EMT), licensed practical nurse (LPN), registered nurse (RN), nurse practitioner (NP), physician assistant (PA), or licensed health care practitioner is also acceptable.

Reemphasize that qualified supervision and discipline are the basis for all the other Trek Safely points.

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