

Stewardship is . . . “Where You Are”

Safety Guidelines

Activity Calendar

Check this calendar to see the best times of year for completing activities. *Use common sense, climate and weather changes can make suggested dates obsolete.*

One of the most critical considerations for an outdoor youth activity program is the safety of its participants.

Primary Leaders of outdoor experiences should be trained in first aid. All volunteers should be trained in safety procedures related to the activities and should carry with them a set of safety instructions and the phone number of their program coordinator or team leader. Safety precautions can never be overemphasized.

The following are some basic common sense safety rules:

Before the Outing:

- Investigate the site. Know where you are going. Assess potential hazards. Choose a safe path, be prepared for changes. *(You are dealing with nature.)*
- Check for cell phone reception in the location you are planning activities.
- Develop a safety plan. Find out the location and telephone number of the nearest available contact and write it down. Locate the nearest medical center and write down directions on how to get between the center and your site(s) so that you can direct emergency personnel.
- Make sure you have permission from parents to seek medical assistance if necessary and current health records on file for each youth. *(Health Forms)*
- Go over safety expectations with youth before arriving at the site, and then briefly upon arrival.
- Listen to weather reports. Never go out if severe weather is predicted or if a storm occurs when you arrive at the site.

Forests/Outdoor Sites:

- Work in teams with at least one partner. Teams of three or four people are best. Always let someone else know where you are, when you intend to return, and what to do if you don't come back at the appointed time. Younger children should do activities in the presence of adults at all times.
- Have a first aid kit handy.
- Youth should have whistles or emergency radios.
- If you drive, park in a safe, visible location. *(If you are a long way up a trail your car will be one more way ER teams will know they are in the right place.)* Be sure your car doesn't pose a hazard to other drivers and that you don't block traffic.
- Put your wallet and keys in a safe place, such as a watertight bag you keep in a pouch strapped to your waist.
- Never cross private property without the permission of the landowner. Activities should be planned at public areas, with access points such as bridges or road crossings or public parks.
- Watch for irate dogs, farm animals, wildlife *(particularly snakes)*, and insects such as ticks, hornets, and wasps. Know what to do if you get bitten or stung.
- Do not coax wildlife with food, or attempt to interact with wildlife. It is *wild*. Observe from a safe distance. Learn the proper ways of responding to the approach of various animals.
- Watch for poison ivy, poison oak, sumac, and other types of vegetation in your area that can cause rashes and irritation.

Water Bodies

- Never wade in swift or high water. No one should enter moving water above their knees. Do not monitor a stream when it is at flood stage.
- Never drink the water in a stream or lake. Assume it is unsafe to drink, and bring your own water from home.
- Do not engage if the stream is posted as unsafe for body contact. If the water appears to be severely polluted, contact your program coordinator.
- Do not walk on unstable stream banks. Disturbing these banks can accelerate erosion and might prove dangerous if a bank collapses. Disturb streamside vegetation as little as possible.
- Be very careful when walking in the stream itself. Rocky-bottom streams can be very slippery and can contain deep pools; muddy-bottom streams might also prove treacherous in areas where mud, silt, or sand have accumulated in sink holes. If you must cross the stream, use a walking stick to steady yourself and to probe for deep water or muck. Your partner(s) should wait on dry land ready to assist you if you fall. Do not attempt to cross streams that are swift and above the knee in depth. Wear waders and rubber gloves in streams suspected of having significant pollution problems.
- If you are sampling from a bridge, be wary of passing traffic. Never lean over bridge rails unless you are firmly anchored to the ground or the bridge with good hand/foot holds.
- **If at any time you feel uncomfortable about the condition of the stream or your surroundings, stop the activity and leave the site at once.**

First Aid Kit

The minimum first aid kit should contain the following items:

- Telephone numbers of emergency personnel such as the police and an ambulance service.
- Several band-aids for minor cuts.
- Antibacterial or alcohol wipes.
- First aid creme or ointment.
- Several gauze pads 3 or 4 inches square for deep wounds with excessive bleeding.
- Acetaminophen for relieving pain and reducing fever.
- A needle for removing splinters.
- A first aid manual which outlines diagnosis and treatment procedures.
- A single-edged razor blade for minor surgery, cutting tape to size, and shaving hairy spots before taping.
- A 2-inch roll of gauze bandage for large cuts.
- A triangular bandage for large wounds.
- A large compress bandage to hold dressings in place.
- A 3-inch wide elastic bandage for sprains and applying pressure to bleeding wounds.
- If a participant is sensitive to bee stings, include their doctor-prescribed antihistamine.

Be sure you have emergency telephone numbers and medical information with you at the field site for everyone participating in field work (*including the leader*) in case there is an emergency.

(Adapted from US EPA 2.3 Safety Considerations)

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/monitoring/volunteer/stream/vms23.html>