



Greater Pittsburgh Council Boy Scouts of America

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Boy Scout Events and Cold Weather

Greater Pittsburgh Council, BSA Risk Management Committee recommendations for Cold Weather Events:

Following the Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared" for cold weather:

- Leaders should review the cold weather camping tips for clothing, camping and first aid with scouts and parents in preparation for cold weather events.
- Clothing and equipment must be checked prior to leaving for a cold weather event and those not prepared should not be permitted to participate.
- Leaders must pay close attention during the event, monitoring for frost bite and hypothermia.
- Events should not be conducted at temperatures below negative 20 degrees Fahrenheit

Cold Weather Camping Tips

COLD WEATHER COMFORT & SAFETY

Cold weather camping as defined by BSA is "camping in weather where the average daily temperature is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit and conditions are cold, wet or windy."

The most important thing to remember about cold weather camping is to **KEEP DRY**. Moisture will reduce the insulating properties of almost everything. To keep yourself warm, remember the word **COLD**.

- **C** keep yourself and your clothes Clean.
- **O** avoid Overheating.
- **L** wear clothes loose and in Layers.
- **D** keep Dry.



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19. Remove the clothes you are wearing before bedding down if they are damp with perspiration. Put on dry clothing or pajamas before entering the sleeping bag.
20. Build a wind break outside your tent by piling up snow or leaves to a height sufficient to protect you when laying down.
21. Hang your sleeping bag up or just lay it out, between trips, so the filling will not compress and lose its insulating properties.
22. Before you get out of bed bring the clothes you plan to wear inside your bag and warm them up some before dressing.
23. Place an empty capped plastic bottle outside your tent door for "night calls." This will reduce your exposure when you have to answer that call. Think twice before using it inside the tent, you do have a tent mate. Remember to empty the bottle away from the camp in the morning.

ODDS AND ENDS

1. If at night you get cold, let the adult leadership know so action can be taken before injury from cold weather health problems occur. In other words it's better to be kidded about forgetting your sleeping bag than risking hypothermia.
2. Organization and proper preparation is very important in cold weather camping. Good meals, proper shelter and comfortable sleeping arrangements make for an enjoyable outing.
3. Drink 2 quarts of fluids per day besides what you drink at meals.
4. Learn to recognize and treat cold weather health problems. These include frostbite, hypothermia, dehydration, chilblains, trench foot, snow blindness and carbon monoxide poisoning.
5. Use the buddy system to check each other for cold weather health problems. Notify the adult leadership if symptoms do occur.
6. If you feel cold gather some wood or do some other type of work. Working will help warm you.
7. Eating ice or snow can reduce your body temperature and it is not pure. Don't eat it.
8. Snow and ice can be used for drinking water but only after boiling.
9. No open flames (candles, matches, etc.) inside the tents. Wiggling your toes inside your boots will help keep feet warm. If your feet get cold put on a stocking cap.
10. Take and wear dark sunglasses if snow is in the forecast. The glare of the sun off the snow could lead to snow blindness. The sunglasses will reduce the glare.
11. Use solid fuel hand warmers. They are cheaper and you can light them yourself. Adult leaders must handle all liquid fuel.
12. The solid fuel hand warmers tend to have a flair up of heat after burning for a while and then they start to cool down. Placing them in an old sock will help to protect you from this "hot spot".
13. Keep off of ice on streams, lakes and ponds.
14. It takes longer to cook food in cold weather, so plan accordingly. Before going to bed pour enough water for breakfast into a pot. It is easier to heat the pot than a plastic water can.
15. Keep your matches in a metal match safe as plastic can freeze and break if dropped.
16. Gather twice as much fuel as you think you'll need for fires.
17. Carry tinder from home. It may be hard to find in snow or wet conditions.
18. Gather your wood and tinder for the morning fire in the evening so that you will be able to start the fire quickly in the morning.
19. Space blankets make good wind shields only. The metallic properties take over the insulation properties in cold weather and become cold conductors.
20. Carry extra plastic bags in cold weather. They can be used as personal wind shields and ponchos by slitting a hole in the top for your head to go through.
21. Carry extra matches because the more you need a fire to warm up, the less likely you will be able to start one easily.
22. Flashlight batteries are affected by cold. You can revive a dead battery by warming it up near the fire.
23. You may want to take a bottle of propane into your tent with you at night. This will keep it warmer and make it easier to light your stove for breakfast.
24. Heaters inside your tent can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Cold weather camping references:

OOPIK manual, No. 34040

BSA Field manual

BSA Snow Camping Venture manual

COLD WEATHER FIRST AID

Dehydration

Excessive loss of body water. Impairs the ability to reason, so the victim may not react properly.

Prevention:

- Drink at least 2 quarts of water a day.
- Avoid dehydrating foods (high protein) and fluids (coffee, caffeine).
- Increase fluid intake at first signs of darker yellow urine.

Symptoms:

- 1 to 5 % deficiency
 - Increased pulse rate
 - Nausea and loss of appetite
 - Dark urine or constipation
 - Irritability, fatigue
 - Thirst
- 6 to 10 % deficiency
 - Headache, dizziness
 - Labored breathing
 - Tingling
 - Absence of salivation
 - Inability to walk
 - Cyanosis (bluish or grayish skin color)
- 11 to 20 % deficiency
 - Swollen tongue, inability to swallow
 - Dim vision, deafness
 - Shriveled, numb skin
 - Painful urination
 - Delirium, unconsciousness and death

Treatment:

- Mild cases - drink liquids, keep warm.
- More severe cases require professional medical treatment.

Hypothermia

Lowering of the inner core temperature of the body. Can and usually does happen above freezing. The victim may not recognize the symptoms and may not be able to think clearly enough to react. Injury or death may result.

Predisposing Conditions:

- Poor physical condition
- Inadequate nutrition and water intake
- Thin build
- Nonprotective clothing
- Getting wet
- Inadequate protection from wind, rain and snow
- Exhaustion

Symptoms:

- Loss of ability to reason
- Shivering
- Slowing, drowsiness, fatigue
- Stumbling

- Third degree (Severe Frostbite)
 - Full thickness of the skin is involved
 - After thawing, pain continues for 2 to 5 weeks
 - Fourth degree (Severe Frostbite)
 - Skin and bone are frozen
 - Swelling and sweating occur
 - Gangrene may develop, amputation may be necessary

Treatment:

- Do not rub affected area with snow. Hold it over fire, or use cold water to thaw it
- Exercise the affected area to promote blood circulation
- Use any warmth available to thaw area
- Do not attempt to thaw frostbitten limbs in the field. It is less harmful for the victim to walk out on a frostbitten limb than to thaw it in the field. Thawing only risks additional injury and the victim will be in too much pain to walk.
- Check for hypothermia
- For more severe cases refer to more complete instructions

Prevention:

- Proper clothing
- Good nutrition, drink water, maintain core temperature
- Use buddy system to check face, nose, and ears
- Immediate treatment of minor symptoms