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Council Health & Safety Committee

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## *Hudson Valley Council Establishes Health & Safety Committee*

Few youth organizations encompass the breadth, volume, and diversity of physical activity common to all Scouting programs, and none enjoys a better safety record. Conscientious, trained adult leaders who are attentive to safety concerns are key to assuring that we are able to deliver the promise of the Scouting programs in the safest way.

In keeping with that tradition the Hudson Valley Council has established a Health & Safety Committee as a resource for the Council's Scouting units. One of the Committee's primary roles is to provide accurate and timely information regarding the BSA's established, new or changed safety guidelines, highlight common safety problems, and provide tips on safely incorporating interesting, challenging and fun activities in unit programs.



The Committee is also available to answer your questions regarding the BSA's safety policies. Questions can be e-mailed to [HealthandSafety@hudsonvalleyscouting.org](mailto:HealthandSafety@hudsonvalleyscouting.org). If we don't have the answer immediately we will research the issue and get an answer back to you as quickly as possible.

## *As Warm Weather Approaches Programming Thoughts Turn To Aquatic Activities*

With Spring not far away many units are planning outdoor activities that involve getting out onto or into the water. Drowning is one of the leading causes of fatalities in outdoor youth programs, and other serious injuries result from diving, horseplay and other water-related risks. When planning your outdoor program keep the following in mind:

- Any activities that will involve swimming require the presence of at least one adult leader who has completed Safe Swim Defense training. This training is available on-line at [www.myscouting.org](http://www.myscouting.org).
- All boating activities require the presence of at least one adult leader who has completed Safety Afloat training. This training is available on-line at [www.myscouting.org](http://www.myscouting.org).
- Many boating activities are restricted to certain levels of Scouting, and different water conditions require different levels of training before youth can engage in the activity. For example, Cub Scouts may only participate in boating activities at Council/District Outdoor Programs, and float trips over extended distances or lasting more than four hours require additional training for all participants beyond what is required for a short flat water activity.
- Consult the Guide to Safe Scouting for direction on what you are authorized to do with your Scouts. The Guide is available for on-line viewing or download as a PDF file at <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/HealthandSafety/GSS/toc.aspx>

## Safe Handling and Use of Chemical Fuels

BSA literature stresses that knowledgeable adult supervision must be provided when Scouts are involved in the storage or handling of chemical fuels in the filling of stoves or lanterns and replacing fuel canisters or tanks. All flammable fuels shall be stored in proper containers and properly labeled. Material safety Data Sheets (MSDS) shall be kept on file for all fuels and chemicals as per OSHA CFR 1901.1200(a)(1). OSHA Standards can be found on the OSHA website [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

At no time should scouts be allowed to carry water bottles that

resemble fuel bottles in color and shape. The bottles or fuel containers should be carried in separate compartments in the scout's pack. A scout mistaking a "white gas" bottle for a water bottle would be extremely dangerous and would require immediate medical care.

Use of liquid fuels for starting any type of fire is prohibited. The solid types of starters are recommended for this purpose. Use of space heaters and similar devices in buildings must be with adequate ventilation, under adult supervision following the

manufacturer's safety precautions. Devices of this type must never be used in tents. See the BAS policy on these issues at <http://www.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/680-013WB.pdf>

Primary reference: *Camp Health and Safety, No. 19-308*. Additional references: *Backpacking merit badge pamphlet, Fieldbook, Camp Program and Property Management (Managing the Council Outdoor Program, Section 1), Scoutmaster Handbook, Tours and Expeditions, and Unit Fireguard Chart*.

## Bumper Crop of Acorns in 2010 Means Increased Lyme Disease Risk in 2012

Variations in the size of acorn crops from year to year are natural and follow certain cycles. White oak acorns mature in one year. Red oaks mature their acorns over two years. Additionally, ever three to five years some oaks over a wide geographical area will produce a bumper, or mast, crop. In 2012 there was a conjunction of white oak and red oak maturation,

plus a red oak mast crop resulting in huge numbers of acorns and plentiful food supplies for many species, including mice and chipmunks. Mice in particular harbor the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.

According to the NY/NJ Trail Conference's *Trail Walker*, research conducted at the Cary Institute of Ecosystems Studies in

Millbrook, NY has shown that the size of an acorn crop is a valuable predictor of the risk for Lyme disease in humans two years later.

Be sure that your Scouts and their parents are warned to take extra precautions against Lyme disease when venturing outdoors this year.

## AXE YARD SAFETY

How many times have you seen a Scout swinging an axe with one or more Scouts standing very nearby watching? Establishing and following basic axe yard safety rules greatly reduces the risk of injuries. The following guidelines are designed to protect Scouts and Scouters, and should be observed by all members while utilizing the axe yard.

### General Rules:

- A Scout is allowed to use the Axe Yard only if he/she has a Totin' Chip card.
- Establish and enforce designated "entrance" and "exit" areas. Assign an "Axe Yard Captain" to control access to and activity in the axe yard.
- Only one Scout will be allowed in the axe yard at a time. You may only use an axe in the designated axe yard.
- Never release any cutting instrument without hearing "Thank You" from the person receiving the instrument.
- Dull is dangerous. All axes should be sharpened at the beginning of every trip.
- Regularly check the condition of your tools. Axes with damaged handles or loose heads should be repaired or retired.

## *Reminder About BSA Child Abuse Reporting Requirements*

The Boy Scouts of America's Youth Protection program is an important part of its overall safety program, and the BSA has designated April as Youth Protection Month. Now is a good time to be sure that all registered adult members in your unit have completed Youth Protection Training within the last two years, and also to remind all leaders of the BSA's requirements for reporting child abuse or violations of Youth Protection guidelines.

### **Youth Protection Reporting Procedures for Volunteers**

There are two types of Youth Protection-related reporting procedures all volunteers must follow:

1. When you witness or suspect any child has been abused or neglected—See "Mandatory Report of Child Abuse" below.
2. When you witness a violation of the BSA's Youth Protection policies—See "Reporting Violations of BSA

Youth Protection Policies" below.

### **Mandatory Report of Child Abuse**

All persons involved in Scouting shall report to local authorities any good-faith suspicion or belief that any child is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation, including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material. You may not abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.

### **Steps to Reporting Child Abuse**

1. Ensure the child is in a safe environment.
2. In cases of child abuse or medical emergencies, call 911 immediately. In addition, if the suspected abuse is in the Scout's home or family, you are required to contact the local child abuse hotline.

3. Notify the Scout executive or his/her designee.

### **Reporting Violations of BSA Youth Protection Policies**

If you think any of the BSA's Youth Protection policies have been violated, including those described within Scouting's Barriers to Abuse, you must notify your local council Scout executive or his/her designee so appropriate action can be taken for the safety of our Scouts.

In the Hudson Valley Council the Scout Executive, Stephen Gray, can be contacted at 845-566-7300 Ext. 304 or by e-mail at [Stephen.Gray@scouting.org](mailto:Stephen.Gray@scouting.org).

Youth Protection Training can be accessed on-line at [www.myscouting.org](http://www.myscouting.org). For more information about the BSA's Youth Protection program go to [www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection.aspx)