



Safety Spotlight: Winter Activities

Winter will be here shortly. It provides Scouts with wonderful and unique opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. However, potentially extreme weather conditions, frigid temperatures and unique hazards associated with outdoor winter activities require careful and conscientious planning to ensure these activities are performed safely.

The most common errors people make during cold-weather activities include not eating the right kinds of foods, not drinking enough water, not having adequate clothing, and being unaware of the signs of frostnip and frostbite.

"One of the best ways to remember what is appropriate to eat when you are spending extended periods of time outside in cold weather is to use good nutrition to 'build the fire within,'" says Dave Bates, experienced outdoorsman and head of the Boy Scouts of America's Camping Service. "Make sure your food consumption includes sugars, which act like a fire starter, carbohydrates and proteins, which act as kindling, and fats that produce the energy needed to keep the fire burning and your body running at peak performance," says Bates. "Stay away from caffeinated drinks such as soda, coffee, and tea; drink plenty of plain water or sports drinks to keep yourself properly hydrated," says Bates.

To avoid these and other similar safety hazards this season, the BSA is sharing its tried-and-true winter safety tips. These commonsense tips can help winter campers, skiers, outdoor enthusiasts, and families who make highway travel plans to "be prepared" for winter hazards.

"'Being prepared' isn't just for Scouts—proper planning is the critical first step for any outdoor outing or excursion," says Bates. "Before embarking on your next cold-weather outing, don't forget to pack a positive attitude, pace yourself, and warm up to these easy-to-remember, but often overlooked, safety tips."

TOP OUTDOOR SAFETY TIPS FOR THE C-O-L-D

Keeping warm is the most important part of cold-weather camping and outdoor activities. Use the C-O-L-D method to stay warm.

- C - Clean

Since insulation is only effective when heat is trapped by dead air spaces, keep your insulating layers clean and fluffy. Dirt, grime, and perspiration can mat down those air spaces and reduce the warmth of a garment.

- O - Overheating

Avoid overheating by adjusting the layers of your clothing to meet the outside temperature and the exertions of your activities. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water, and refrain from drinking caffeinated drinks that act as diuretics.

- L - Loose Layers

A steady flow of warm blood is essential to keep all parts of your body heated. Wear several loosely fitting layers of clothing and footgear that will allow maximum insulation without impeding your circulation. Having clothing that is bright colored (orange or red) is also a good idea, so hunters and sportsmen can see you in snowy conditions. Always have a hat and wear it.

- D - Dry

Sweaty, damp clothing and skin can cause your body to cool quickly, possibly leading to frostnip and hypothermia. Keep dry by avoiding clothes that absorb moisture. Always brush away snow on your clothes before you enter a heated area. Keep clothing around your neck loosened so that body heat and moisture can escape instead of soaking through your layers.

Prepare for icy temperatures

Select bright thermal clothing that can be layered as the weather changes. When hands and feet begin to chill, it's time to put on a hat. Hats help trap body heat by preventing it from escaping through your head. Wear suitable shoes for walking on frozen ground or ice, and don't forget other essentials like mittens, gloves, and scarves/neck warmers.

Find supplies for campfires

Prior to sundown, find tinder and wood necessary for starting and maintaining a campfire.

Know the area

Thoroughly research the area where you are planning to go, or go with someone who knows the area and may have camped there before. Be mindful of potential avalanche areas or unstable ice.

Travel with a buddy

Groups of four to 10 are an even better idea. Should a problem arise, such as injury or hypothermia, someone can stay with the injured person(s) while others seek help.

Watch for frostnip and hypothermia

Keep an eye on friends and fellow campers. If the areas around the eyes and lips, or the lips themselves, begin to turn grayish white, the person may be experiencing frostnip. Signs of confusion, inaction, and shivering are all progressive signs of hypothermia (overexposure to winter elements). If you get cold, huddle up or sit by the fire. Action and movement will also stimulate blood flow and distribute warmth throughout the body.

Source: 2003 BSA Press Release - "*Be Prepared*" for Winter Safety

Additional Resources Regarding Winter Activities:

- *Winter Camping Safety* - Guide to Safe Scouting
- *Eight Essentials for Staying Warm While Cold-Weather Camping* - October 16, 2012 www.scoutmagazine.org
- *Winter Sports Safety* - Guide to Safe Scouting