

Great Salt Lake Counsel

Safety Spotlight

The Buddy System: It is more than having Scouts hike together in pairs. It provides enhanced safety and protection for Scouts and their leaders during numerous activities and in various settings.

Safety is a fundamental and guiding principle of Scouting. Many accidents, injuries and unfortunate incidents will be prevented if Scouts and their leaders follow the buddy system. Excerpts from the *Guide to Safe Scouting* regarding the buddy system are set forth below.

Leadership Requirements for Trips and Outings

If separate shower and latrine facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. Likewise, youth and adults must shower at different times. The buddy system should be used for latrines by having one person wait outside the entrance, or provide "Occupied" and "Unoccupied" signs and/or inside door latches. Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of youth members in situations where youth members are changing clothes or taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

Safe Swim Defense

Buddy System

Every participant is paired with another. Buddies stay together, monitor each other, and alert the safety team if either needs assistance or is missing.

Buddies check into and out of the area together. Buddies are normally in the same ability group and remain in their assigned area. If they are not of the same ability group, then they swim in the area assigned to the buddy with the lesser ability.

A buddy check reminds participants of their obligation to monitor their buddies and indicates how closely the buddies are keeping track of each other. Roughly every 10 minutes, or as needed to keep the buddies together, the lookout, or other person designated by the supervisor, gives an audible signal, such as a single whistle blast, and a call for "Buddies." Buddies are expected to raise each other's hand before completion of a slow, audible count to 10. Buddies that take longer to find each other should be reminded of their responsibility for the other's safety.

Once everyone has a buddy, a count is made by area and compared with the total number known to be in the water. After the count is confirmed, a signal is given to resume swimming.

Distance and Competitive Swimming in Open Water

The following policies apply when distance swimming is conducted outside the confines of a normal Safe Swim Defense area.

- Each individual swimmer, or at most a buddy pair, may be accompanied by a rowboat with two people onboard—one skilled in controlling the boat and the other trained in basic water rescue—equipped with a reaching device and flotation aid, continuously watching the swimmers.
- Alternatively, a closed circuit maybe established where all swimmers are constantly in reach of safety personnel strategically positioned at fixed points on anchored boats, the shore, or piers. Each participant swims with a buddy, and the number and spacing of the swimmers in the water should not exceed the capacity of the

watchers to easily count the swimmers as they move from one zone to another.

BSA Scuba Policy: Training and Supervision

See *Guide to Safe Scouting* at:

<http://www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety/GSS.aspx>. Pages 10 - 12.

Safety Afloat

Swimming Ability

Operation of any boat on a float trip is limited to youth and adults who have completed the BSA swimmer classification test. Swimmers must complete the following test, which should be administered annually.

Jump feet first into water over the head in depth. Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl; then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn. After completing the swim, rest by floating.

For activity afloat, those not classified as a swimmer are limited to multi-person craft during outings or float trips on calm water with little likelihood of capsizing or falling overboard. They may operate a fixed-seat rowboat or pedal boat accompanied by a buddy who is a swimmer. They may ride in a canoe or other paddle craft with an adult swimmer skilled in that craft as a buddy. They may ride as part of a group on a motorboat or sailboat operated by a skilled adult.

Buddy System

All participants in an activity afloat are paired as buddies who are always aware of each other's situation and prepared to sound an alarm and lend assistance immediately when needed. When several craft are used on a float trip, each boat on the water should have a "buddy boat." All buddy pairs must be accounted for at regular intervals during the activity and checked off the water by the qualified supervisor at the conclusion of the activity. Buddies either ride in the same boat or stay near each other in a single-person craft.

Sports and Activities: The Sweet 16 of BSA Safety

Buddy System. The long history of the "buddy system" in Scouting has shown that it is always best to have at least one other person with you and aware at all times of your circumstances and what you are doing in any outdoor or strenuous activity.

Unit Fund-raisers

Youth should engage in money-earning projects only in neighborhoods that are safe and familiar and should use the buddy system.

Winter Camping Safety

Buddy System. Having Scouts paired aids in monitoring each other's physical condition and observation of surroundings and circumstances.