

# CAMPING SAFETY

Pathfinder leaders should be alert regarding safety. The leader should know how to maintain necessary health, safety, and sanitary conditions without neglecting opportunities for fun and high adventure. "Safety Through Skill" should be our motto. Younger children should not be allowed to use heavy, long-handled axes. A young child can easily learn to safely and effectively handle a light hatchet or hand ax.

Outdoor benefits prove rather ineffectual if the Pathfinder returns home with a cold and earache, a case of bad sunburn, poison ivy, an upset stomach, a cut foot, or a sprained ankle. A camping experience can destroy forever a Pathfinder's interest in the outdoors just as easily and as effectively as it can foster and build it up. Look at an overnight camp not as a test of endurance or a test of one's ability to stand discomfort, confusion, and untidy living conditions, but as a unique living situation in which campers and counselors can, by their own skill and knowledge, adapt themselves to primitive conditions sanely, safely, healthfully, and in the spirit of fun and adventure.

## KNIFEMANSHIP

There are many types of knives, but the pocketknife and sheath knife will be especially useful in outpost camping. The pocketknife consists of a blade that closes into the handle, a screw driver, a bottle opener, a can opener, and possibly a punch blade. The sheath knife is an open-blade knife carried in a sheath on the belt. (A knife is of no value unless it is made of good steel that will cut.) The following knife rules should always be observed.

1. A knife should be sharp and rust-free at all times. When sharpening a knife, use a Carborundum sharpening stone and draw the blade over the stone with the edge foremost.
2. When whittling or cutting crude material, always cut away from yourself (to prevent accidents).
3. Never split a piece of wood with a knife by hammering on the back of the blade. This will ruin the blade, and if it is a pocketknife, will weaken the hinge.
4. Always keep the blade away from fire. If it is overheated, the temper of the steel will be affected, the knife will become soft and will never hold an edge again.
5. When a pocketknife is not in use, be sure it is closed and put away. When a sheath knife is not in use, put it back in the sheath. Do not leave it lying around. The sheath should be carried on the belt just back of the hip joint.
6. Clear the ground an ax length around—ax length plus length of your arm.
7. Onlookers stay two ax lengths' away.
8. Carry axes (hatchets) with the blade out.
9. Pass the ax (hatchet) with its harmless end first - handle first and head down.
10. When using an ax:
  - a. Get a firm footing before swinging to chop wood.
  - b. Spread feet apart and keep them out of the way.
  - c. Rest when tired.
11. Never touch a living tree, unless with definite permission and for a definite purpose.

## **HIKING**

1. Know the proper clothing for the type of hiking you will and could be doing. Example: Summer, hot rugged terrain; high altitude hiking, snow hiking.
2. Shoes and boots should be comfortable, have ankle support, well broken in and enough room for a heavy pair of socks.
3. When hiking along a road, walk in a single file, on the left side of the road facing the oncoming traffic. At night wear the proper clothing so you can be seen or carry a flashlight (ging-reflective tape).
4. No hitchhiking and obey all "No Trespassing" signs.
5. Carry the proper equipment when hiking. Example: pure water and a first-aid kit.

## **FIRE SAFETY**

1. Locate a safe place for all fires cleared area without any close overhanging branches.
2. DO NOT use petroleum products for fires. Examples: gas, kerosene, oil. These items can cause injury to both the person lighting the fire as well as those and things in the immediate vicinity.
3. Make sure all fires are completely out and doused with water so you can put your hand in without being burned or feeling any heat. Cover with dirt.
4. Cut sod away from your fire pit, build fire, extinguish fire, replace sod, and see if you can cover all trace of activity.

## **IF YOU GET LOST**

1. Sit down and think—don't panic—force yourself to sit still until you can think clearly. Don't try to remember details but general landmarks. Where were you when you were lost on the trail or at a known point? This may take one half hour or more.
2. Don't move from the point where you are until you mark it. Place a rag on a stick in the ground or put your hat on a stump. Do something to mark your spot.
3. Next climb a tree and try to locate a familiar spot. Don't be in a hurry. Take time. Look for smoke. This usually means people are there. If you have a compass, check exact direction. If not, check landmarks by which you can chart your course.
4. From your plainly marked spot, take 50, 75, or 100 steps away. This will depend on how dense the woods are. Always keep your marked spot and look for a trail, road, your own tracks, or a stream, etc.
5. If the time is within an hour of sundown, make ready to spend a comfortable night in the woods. Don't be afraid, nothing will hurt you.

6. Build a safe fire. Have enough wood on hand to keep it going all night, using all safety rules for fire-building.
7. In the morning if you are not sure which direction to go, place green branches on the fire to create smoke—do not put fire out. Three fires will be a signal for help.
8. Wait for help to come. Listen for the calls of searchers.

## POISONOUS PLANTS

There are three plants that we must be concerned with—poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac.

1. **Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*)**—A trailing or climbing vine on an erect shrub. The leaves are on a long stalk 4" to 14" long. Leaflets are highly variable, hairless or slightly hairy, glossy or dull, toothless or saw-toothed and variously lobed. The end leaflet is pointed, longer and more stalk than the side pair. It has climbing stems with short aerial rootlets along the sides and covered with dark fibers when it is old. The berries are small, hard, white in drooping clusters. Height is 2-4 feet when not climbing.
2. **Poison Oak (*R. toxicodendron*)**—It is very similar to poison ivy but always erect. The leaflets are hairy and often lobed like an oak leaf. Poison ivy and poison oak may also be the same plant depending on where they are found in the United States—usually they are found in woods and thickets. Fruit is apparent August through November.

Warning: Do not touch. Contact with any part of the body can result in severe dermatitis. Washing with soap and water or jewelweed juice within a few hours often prevents rashes. If touched, keep hands away from eyes.

3. **Poison Sumac (*Rhus vernix*)**—A shrub or small tree. The leaves are 6-12 inches long with 7 to 13 pointed, toothless leaflets. Twigs and buds are hairless. The bark is smooth, dark, and speckled with dark spots. Note the spreading or drooping clusters of small, ivory-white berries. The height is from 6-20 feet. It is found in partly wooded swamps, usually east of the Mississippi. Fruit: August through spring.

Warning: Do not touch or eat berries. More virulent than poison ivy. Contact can cause severe dermatitis.

## WATER

1. No matter how clear the water looks, it may not be safe to drink. Make sure—purify it yourself.
2. One way of purifying water is to first strain it through a clean cloth to remove any sediment, and then boil it vigorously for at least one full minute. In high altitudes it is well to boil it more than a minute, because in higher altitudes water boils at a lower temperature.

3. One of the easiest ways to purify water is to disinfect it with any of several chemicals.  
Examples:
  - a. Iodine or chlorine tablets
  - b. Tincture of iodine—three drops to each quart of water. Mix well and let stand for 30 minutes.
  - c. Laundry chlorine bleach comes in different strengths.
    - Chlorine 1% - 10 drops per quart
    - Chlorine 4-6% - 2 drops per quart
    - Chlorine 7-10% - 1 drop per quart.Mix well. Let stand for 30 minutes. For muddy or turbid water, double the amount of chemicals.
4. Some of the best sources of water in a wilderness area are springs, where the water is bubbling out of the side of a hill, and mountain streams. It is best to go upstream to build up a dam, preferably above the function of small streams. Avoid areas where there is dark-colored vegetation in the water, floating debris, or odors, for these may indicate heavy pollution. Lakes are probably the poorest source of water supply.

## **STOVES**

There are four basic types of stoves: white-gas burning models, white-gas hand-operated fuel pumps, kerosene stoves, and cartridge stoves (butane, propane).

Safety comes first, Never use a stove in a tent. After filling tank, any spillage should be cleaned up. Stove should not be used near any open gas or fuel container. The best time to fill stoves is after use, so any spillage can evaporate before being used again.

## **WEATHER**

Always be prepared for the unexpected type of weather. Take clothing necessary for different types of weather.

## **FIRST AID KITS**

Discuss the importance of every person in an outdoor setting having a first aid kit. Pathfinders should all carry a pocket-size kit, but Pathfinder clubs should have a more complete pack. Sooner or later all clubs will find themselves several hours or days from medical help. Adequate supplies and equipment should be readily available to ensure the best safety and recovery of any participants, as well as legal protection.

1. **Personal First Aid Kit**
  - a. Ace or elastic roll bandage with clip
  - b. Band-Aids
  - c. Disinfectant- iodine, hydrogen peroxide, etc.
  - d. Cravat bandages
  - e. Snakebite kit
  - f. Sunburn cream
  - g. Advil or pain medicine
  - h. Waterproof matches
  - i. Adhesive tape
  - j. 2" gauze
  
2. **Club's First Aid Kit**
  - a. Ace or elastic bandages with clips
  - b. Band-Aids (good supply)
  - c. Disinfectant (iodine, hydrogen peroxide, etc.)
  - d. Cravat bandages
  - e. Snakebite kit
  - f. Roll bandages (gauze)
  - g. Gauze pads
  - h. Burn ointment
  - i. Aspirin or pain medicine
  - j. Sunburn cream or lotion
  - k. Adhesive tape
  - l. Scissors
  - m. Tweezers

## **TRAINING**

At least one staff member and preferably all staff members should have some degree of medical training and current certification. The minimum required is a current student Red Cross First Aid card, but advanced First Aid, paramedical training, Outward Bound certification or other medical training is highly recommended. All Pathfinders should also have First Aid training according to their class level.

## **RESCUE**

Use any two or all of the hypothetical rescue situations and analyze rescue procedures.

Note:

1. Notification of whereabouts to persons not in activity or with proper authorities.
2. Use of standard equipment, i.e., ropes, pulleys, backboards, knots, etc.
3. Improvised equipment.
4. Evacuation procedure alternatives. Send for help or carry out person needing help.