

# WINTER CAMPING SKILLS

**The following are winter camping skills that the Troop has learned over the years.**

Winter camping can be a lot of fun when you are prepared for the elements of snow and cold temperatures. However, it can be deadly if unprepared. Hypothermia (the chilling of the body's core temperature) can set in quickly if you're not careful and paying attention to what you and your body are doing.

For instance, if you are doing something very active such as running or chopping wood, you will begin to perspire and will need to remove some of your layers before the perspiration causes your clothing to become too wet to insulate. When you are relatively inactive such as during mealtime, you will need to increase your layers in order to stay warm. So you need to be very aware of what you and your body are doing in cold weather.

**WHAT TO TAKE:** SEE BSA HANDBOOK Pages 203, 204, 224 and 225

These lists are very helpful to get you thinking about what to bring. You will need to make adjustments for each camping trip. Always bring rain gear unless you are absolutely sure the temperature will not go above 25 degrees F.

**BE SURE TO USE THE LAYERING METHOD FOR CLOTHING!**

## **Clothing - BEST APPROACH**

Next to Skin: Polypropylene (wicks moisture away)

Then: Polyester Fleece or Wool sweater

Then: Insulated parka with hood with nylon outer shell that breaks the wind

Thermal long underwear works well. If you have cotton clothes, then bring several changes so you can change when it gets damp.

Don't go out and buy everything. Use what you have but use the above recommendations as a guide when buying new clothes.

**Socks:** Wicking type Poly/Wool blend is recommended

You can also use several pairs of socks at a time, but if your feet sweat a lot, you will need to change your socks often (when inactive) in order to keep your feet warm. So bring plenty of socks. Warm feet go a long way toward feeling comfortable in cold weather.

## **Boots**

If you are not backpacking, then a pair of waterproof type "ducks" with thick socks or insulated inserts is recommended. If hiking, then hiking boots are recommended for foot support. Sneakers are strongly discouraged as they have little insulating value and are not water resistant. Also, tight fitting boots can restrict blood circulation causing cold feet.

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## **Sleeping Bags**

When the temperature is expected to drop below 35 degrees F, you either need a mummy type bag rated for 20 degrees F or you need to use two sleeping bags one inside the other. Two sleeping bags rated at 40 degrees F will allow you to be comfortable down to at least 20 degrees F. Wearing long underwear and wool socks inside the bag will also help you to stay warm as long as you have another pair to wear during the day since these may become damp inside the sleeping bag. Also, a knit type hat worn to bed will keep you warm. You lose a lot of heat through your head.

## **Sleeping Bag Pad**

An essential item for in winter camping is an insulating device between the ground and your sleeping bag. There are several ways to do it, but a closed cell foam pad (approx. 1/2 inch thick) is light weight, costs around \$10.00 to \$15.00 and does the job. **DO NOT USE OPEN CELL FOAM PADS AS THEY ABSORB WATER.**

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## **REMEMBER THE WORD "COLD" TO HELP STAY WARM DURING WINTER CAMPING** - (Reference: BSA Fieldbook, Page 336)

### **C - Clean**

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

### **O - Overheating**

Avoid overheating by adjusting your layers of clothing to meet the outside temperature and the exertions of your activities. Excessive sweating can dampen your clothing and cause chilling later on.

### **L - Layering**

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.

### **D - Dry**

Damp clothing and skin can cause your body to cool quickly, possibly leading to frostbite or hypothermia. Keep dry by avoiding cotton clothing that absorbs moisture, brushing snow from your clothes before it melts, and loosening the clothing around neck and chest. Since body heat can drive perspiration through many layers of breathable cloth and force it out into the air, don't wear waterproof clothes.