



AMERICAN
HERITAGE
GIRLS'

OUTDOOR
TRAINING



Guidebook



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PART 1 INTRODUCTION

American Heritage Girls has a strong outdoor emphasis and believes that outdoor education and programming plays a significant role in healthy child development. Developing an atmosphere in which girls can explore and learn to adore the natural environment is a vehicle to sensory learning that can produce an increased sense of self-worth, courage and confidence. American Heritage Girls offers a comprehensive outdoor program for girls ages 5-18, including, but not limited to 14 outdoor-based badges and group camping opportunities. The progressive nature of the program, through outdoor skill acquisition and increasing roles in leadership, allows it to grow with a girl.

In an effort to assist Leaders in implementing outdoor programming in a safe manner, AHG's Outdoor Training Program has been developed. Many dedicated volunteers have worked over the past three years to gather valuable resources and information.

AHG's Outdoor Training program seeks to give Leaders tools to plan and implement safe, exciting outdoor experiences. The Outdoor Training will allow leaders to learn:

- *How to plan a safe outing, following AHG Health and Safety Guidelines.*
- *How to teach girls teamwork, through progressive outdoor programming.*
- *How to teach girls leadership skills, including planning and decision-making, through progressive outdoor programming.*
- *How to teach girls Environmental Stewardship and Outdoor Ethics, through progressive outdoor programming.*
- *How to increase girls' confidence through progressive Outdoor Skills Acquisition.*
- *Effective program implementation, incorporating all program emphases into a progressive outdoor experience.*
- *Effective program implementation through an understanding of the developmental stages of girls, as well as girls with special needs and how that translates into the outdoor setting.*
- *How to locate appropriate resources for continued learning.*

The Indoor Classroom curriculum of the training will provide a foundation for planning effective and safe outdoor experiences. These principles can be translated to outdoor adventures across the continuum. Whether you are planning a one-hour hike or a 10-Day paddling trip, the basic principles of the Indoor Classroom can be applied. The Indoor Classroom training may be delivered through a live, group training conducted by a Trainer appointed by AHG, Inc.

For hands-on outdoor skills training, AHG encourages its members to contact their local Boy Scout Councils for a listing of training opportunities. BSA offers top-notch training at all levels of outdoor skills. AHG is actively creating supplemental materials to assist AHG Leaders in translating what they learn through BSA training into AHG program application.

ADDRESSING THE NEED

Research is increasingly calling attention to children's need to spend time in the out of doors, and also the huge dichotomy between this need and the reality of their everyday lives. Richard Louv, author of the best-selling book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*, cites the following disturbing statistics.

"In a typical week, only 6 percent of children, ages nine to thirteen, play outside on their own. Studies by the National Sporting Goods Association, and American Sports Data, a research firm, show a dramatic decline in the past decade in such outdoor activities as swimming and fishing. Even bike riding is down 31 percent since 1995. In San Diego, California, according to a survey by nonprofit Aquatic Adventures,

90 percent of inner-city kids do not know how to swim; 34 percent have never been to the beach. In suburban Fort Collins, Colorado, teachers shake their heads in dismay when they describe the many students who have never been to the mountains, visible year-round on the western horizon.”

Louv shares research that tells of the positive effects of spending time in nature, including an increase in self-esteem, problem solving, spiritual development, an overall improvement in psychological well being and motivation to learn. Recognizing that many parents deal with fear surrounding letting their children explore nature, Louv responds that:

“part of our task, as a society, is to begin to think in terms of comparative risks, and the great benefits of a national nature-child reunion. Yes, there are risks outside our homes. But there are also risks in raising children under virtual protective house arrest: threats to their independent judgment and value of place, to their ability to feel awe and wonder, to their sense of stewardship for the earth—and, most immediately, threats to their psychological and physical health. The rapid increase of childhood obesity leads many health-care leaders to worry that the current generation of children may be the first since World War II to die at an earlier age than their parents. Getting kids outdoors more, riding bikes, running, swimming—and, especially, experiencing nature directly—could serve as an antidote to much of what ails the young.”

American Heritage Girls has the unique opportunity to start reversing these frightening trends, the opportunity to bring girls back into nature. AHG’s progressive outdoor program provides girls with an opportunity to explore the outdoors in a manner that is often not available at home or school. Outdoor programming will assist girls in developing spiritually, physically and emotionally. Activities that allow girls to get their hands dirty and their feet wet, help girls learn self reliance, teamwork, leadership skills, to take risks, set goals, the importance of conservancy and the benefits of physical activity. Outdoor experiences also assist girls in growing spiritually, allowing them to experience a sense of awe that can be translated into a deep desire to become good stewards of the amazing natural world that God has given.

The structure of the AHG program provides fertile ground for growth through outdoor experiences. Longevity of the AHG program (ages 5-18) is beneficial, as it allows girls to develop a deep attachment to nature over years of merit badge acquisition, outdoor activities, camping, high adventure and environmental education. AHG’s Troop structure allows sisters of varying ages to experience nature side-by-side, helping to create a family culture that celebrates and cherishes time in nature. Establishing this culture during youth will help girls carry these values long into adulthood.

Whether a girl is earning a hiking badge, or seeing her first leopard toad, AHG provides girls with exciting outdoor experiences that will help girls form habits of a physically active, environmentally aware life.

Trained Leaders are empowered leaders, and empowered Leaders take action, bringing their Troops into the out-of-doors. As Leaders themselves gain confidence in the outdoors, they will lead their girls into the outdoors more often and for more challenging activities. The volunteer structure of the AHG program allows caring adult mentors to teach by modeling positive attitudes and behavior in the out-of-doors. These trained adults give parents the peace of mind to allow their girls to get out and explore in a “safe” setting.



INDOOR CLASSROOM TOPICS



PART 2 PLANNING AN OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Planning is perhaps the most crucial part in conducting an effective, safe and enjoyable outdoor adventure for girls. Proper planning allows activities to run with ease, risk to be reduced and an effective matching of girls’ needs and desires with activities. Planning can seem an overwhelming task, but work put in during the planning stage comes back 10 fold as leaders are able to also enjoy well-planned outdoor activities.

SETTING GOALS FOR DESIRED OUTCOMES

When planning an outdoor adventure, it is important to first determine the desired outcome.

Do we want girls to earn a badge as a result of this experience?

Do we want this outdoor activity to serve as a Family Event, providing families with valuable time together?

Do we want service to be the main focus of the outdoor experience?

Do we want girls to return from their adventure with newly gained skills?

Do we want girls to experience a renewed sense of God in their life?

Identifying the desired outcome for an outdoor adventure will help guide the rest of the planning and implementation. Be cautious when determining outcomes, so that they remain realistic. Outcomes will be influenced by many factors, including girls' developmental stage, allotted activity time, etc.

Once goals and desired outcomes have been set, use them as a gauge against which all activities are measured. If you are thinking of planning a 5 hour biking trip, ask if this trip will meet all of your desired outcomes. Does the length of trip, destination or even activity need to be changed in order to meet your desired outcomes? Does there need to be the addition of another activity? Once you feel strongly that your activity will meet your desired outcomes, you are ready to begin planning!

INCORPORATING PROGRAM EMPHASES

In an effort to offer girls a well-rounded program, one goal for every AHG function or outing is to cover all six program emphases, or as many as possible. Sometimes, program emphases are covered without much effort, simply through the innate nature of the activity. Other times, it may require a bit more thought, creativity and planning to create a well-rounded program.

Effective outdoor program implementation should attempt to address the following areas:

LIFE SKILL ENHANCEMENT

Completing badge requirements or simply learning new outdoor skills. Life skill enhancement is progressive by nature. As a girl grows and matures she is more capable of mastering advanced skills. Consider utilizing the Outdoor Skill Progression Chart (available on the Outdoor Training Site) to help with planning Life Skill Enhancement on your next outdoor adventure. Utilize Troop and community resources by inviting local "experts" to share their expertise with the girls.

GIRL LEADERSHIP

Outdoor adventures lend themselves well to girl leadership. Girls can test their leadership skills during the planning stages – making choices about destination, menu, equipment, etc. Girls can take on leadership and mentoring roles while teaching new skills and leading activities. Girls can also use their AHG outdoor experiences to be a leader in their home and schools, encouraging their own family and friends to become more active and enjoy God's beautiful creation.

DEVELOPING TEAMWORK AND BUILDING CONFIDENCE

The outdoors are a wonderful place for girls to spread their wings and discover new traits within themselves. Working together to set up a tent, conquer a climbing wall or build a blazing fire all help to develop a strong sense of teamwork. The outdoors have the ability to strip us of our normal defenses, making us vulnerable and therefore making relationships and accomplishments even more lasting. As a girl conquers her fear of a snake, that unknown sound in the night or as she accomplishes things she never imagined, she will also gain a strong sense of confidence.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

There are a variety of ways to incorporate service into an outdoor adventure. Working with a local park or nature center, or even working in your charter partner's gardens are a great way to get girls enjoying the outdoors, while giving back. Offering to clean up a trail at a local park is a great example of a way you can give your girls an

outdoor experience while serving! Teaching girls to be good stewards of God's creation is a great way to build up character values such as respect, responsibility and reverence.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The outdoors can be tons of fun! Troop hiking trips and regional camporees are just two ways to encourage a girl's social development through outdoor programming. Parent-child outdoor programs and family events are great ways to build crucial relationships, while enjoying the outdoors.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Outdoor experiences also assist girls in growing spiritually, allowing them to experience a sense of awe that can be translated into a deep desire to become good stewards of the amazing natural world that God has given. A mountain view and a star-filled sky can provide an awe-inspiring backdrop for transforming time with God. The outdoors can also offer girls an escape from their fast-paced, busy lives – a quiet place to spend time seeking God, getting to know Him and discerning His will for their lives. Incorporating a daily quiet time, where girls spend time praying, journaling and reading God's Word, into a Troop camping trip is a great way to incorporate this emphasis.

When planning outdoor activities continually look for ways in which to incorporate the AHG Program Emphases. Girls will benefit from this thoughtful approach, as they will gain a well-rounded experience.

PROGRAMMING

The types of activities planned during an outdoor adventure will vary based on the desired outcomes, age, ability and maturity of the girls, access to skilled Leaders, and site attributes and restrictions. It is important that when planning specific activities that they support the desired outcomes, the AHG Mission and cover as many program emphases as possible (see setting goals section above).

Activity ideas can come from a variety of sources. The Outdoor Training Site contains a number of ideas for exciting outdoor activities. Local "authorities", such as naturalists, teachers, park volunteers, hobby enthusiasts, etc. are a great resource for creative programming ideas. Depending on the planned adventure, inviting one of these "authorities" to teach an outdoor skill or lead an activity, may be appropriate. The AHG Leader and Girl websites both offer a variety of ideas and resources for outdoor programming as well. AHG badges can also serve as a foundation for a variety of outdoor activities.

Tips for effective outdoor programming:

- Consider age, ability, maturity and interests of girls
- Ensure that programming works to achieve desired outcomes for outdoor activity
- Seek to plan a variety of programming that address all 6 AHG program emphases
- Be creative! Creative programming creates a unique experience girls aren't likely to forget.
- Ensure that activities/programming are progressive in nature, building upon previously acquired skills and leaving opportunity for future learning.
- Leave some program time for "open exploration." Allowing girls to explore nature on their own terms, in a safe, controlled manner, is crucial to truly connecting to nature and the potential for spiritual growth through the outdoors.

LEARNING STYLES

When developing outdoor activities, it is important to consider learning styles. Just as girls have differing personalities, they also have different ways of learning. Understanding how each girl learns will help in the planning and implementation of an outdoor adventure in which they can most effectively accomplish the desired skill or outcome.

In their article, "*Understanding the Way Campers Learn*," by Cathey Prudhomme the Christian Camp and

Conference Association associate four learning styles with four different animals, as developed by Gary Smalley and John Trent.

THE BEAVER, a no-nonsense communicator – Concrete Sequential Learning Style

What Beavers Need: Consistency, routines. Need encouragement to take risks and try new things.

THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER, constantly searching for more information – Abstract Sequential Learning Style

What Golden Retrievers Need: Reason, logic, complete & thorough information. Need time to process.

THE LION, natural risk taker – Concrete Random Learning Style

What Lions Need: Creative communication. Question answers to provide a challenge & help them refine.

THE OTTER, driven by relationships – Abstract Random Learning Style

What Otters Need: Verbal assurances. Affirm and challenge to go further.

Recognizing and understanding the learning styles of girls will enable the creation of an environment conducive to learning and growing. The challenge is to not only understand different learning styles but to encourage each to thrive in the Troop setting.

DEVELOPMENTAL & SPECIAL NEEDS OF GIRLS

It is important to take into consideration the needs of girls when planning an outdoor program. Girls needs differ, depending on their developmental stage, as well as with the presence of any special needs.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

Programs should involve girls at the skill and understanding levels they are capable of handling. Giving girls just enough, without overwhelming them will assist in their overall development. Today's culture pushes young girls into being competent rather than innocent. We see it in television, fashion and even extracurricular trends. For this reason, AHG has implemented a progressive outdoor skills program, so that girls can become competent in a manner which encourages development, rather than rush it. With each AHG level girls will be introduced not only to new outdoor skills, but also the opportunity to participate in new outdoor experiences. As we assist girls in step by step reaching toward their goal of competency, we are helping to instill in them the motivation that the apostle Paul felt – "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14. We can teach girls to press on, strong and steady, rather than to sprint and tire – and introducing a progressive outdoor program is one tool we can use.

When planning and implementing programming, a girl's physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual maturity must be taken into consideration. Programs should meet girls where they are developmentally in order for them to learn and mature effectively. A few suggestions from the Christian Camp and Conference Association include: "First and foremost, let them be children! Encourage situations where they can succeed. When they succeed, they gain self-confidence. Let them take initiative, and do their own projects. Support creativity. Recognize strengths. Remember, encouragement and praise will be retained much longer than criticism."

First and foremost, let them be children! Encourage situations where they can succeed. When they succeed, they gain self-confidence.

Christian Camp and Conference Association

AHG'S MODEL FOR PROGRESSIVE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES

AHG has developed a model suggesting how a girl should progress through outdoor experiences. This model is based on a girl who enters the program as a Pathfinder with little to no outdoor experience. Adjustments to this model may be needed based on a girls age when entering the AHG program, as well as her history of outdoor experience. Leaders are urged to not push younger girls ahead in this progression.

Pathfinder	Tenderheart	Tenderheart (2-3)	Explorer	Pioneer	Patriot
Meeting Time Trips	Meeting Time Trips	Meeting Time Trips	Meeting Time Trips	Meeting Time Trips	Meeting Time Trips
Multi-Troop Day Camps	Multi-Troop Day Camps	Multi-Troop Day Camps	Multi-Troop Day Camps	Multi-Troop Day Camps	Multi-Troop Day Camps
Family Camping	Family Camping	Family Camping	Family Camping	Family Camping	Family Camping
	Day Trips	Day Trips	Day Trips	Day Trips	Day Trips
		Multi-Troop Resident Camp	Multi-Troop Resident Camp	Multi-Troop Resident Camp	Multi-Troop Resident Camp
		One-night Troop Trips (cabins, bunkhouse)	Simple Troop Overnight Trips	Simple Troop Overnight Trips	Simple Troop Overnight Trips
			Multi-Night Troop Camping (tents, cabins)	Multi-Night Troop Camping (tents, cabins)	Multi-Night Troop Camping (tents, cabins)
				3 Night + Camping Trips	3 Night + Camping Trips
				High Adventure Day Trips	High Adventure Day Trips
					High Adventure Multi-Nights

This progression is designed to be a guide to assist Leaders in planning outdoor activities for their Troops. AHG Health and Safety Guidelines should be consulted prior to planning an outdoor adventure, and girls' age, abilities, experience, interests and maturity should always be taken into consideration.

In addition to these age guidelines, AHG has age restrictions on some of its activities. Please refer to the Health & Safety Guidelines. These age restrictions are for the girls' safety.

SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE OUTDOORS

AHG seeks to be an inclusive program, where girls of all abilities can grow spiritually, emotionally and physically. Jesus calls us to include all in our ministry. Jesus was the ultimate "includer." He reached out to individuals of all abilities and ailments, lovingly including them into his ministry. Whenever possible, AHG seeks to involve all girls, despite their special needs, into programming. This may involve making special accommodations, or program alterations to ensure participation. Girls with special needs can, and should be whenever possible, included in all Troop outdoor activities. Some special needs that may require accommodations when planning an outdoor activity include:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| *Epilepsy | *Blind/Visually Impaired | - Diabetes |
| *Severe Food Allergies | *Deaf/Hard of Hearing | - Heart Defects |
| *Asthma | *Autism | - Hepatitis |
| *Health Impaired | *Bipolar Disorder | *Mental Health – including |
| *Learning Disabilities | *Speech and Language Disorder | depression and anxiety disorders |
| *Mental Retardation | *Wheel Chair/Physical Limitations | |
| *Dyslexia | *Health Disorders | |
| *ADD | - HIV/AIDS | |
| *ADHD | | |
| *Cerebral Palsy | | |

Being aware of any special needs within the Troop is crucial to the planning process. Planning ahead to meet these needs will be critical to including all girls. Authorities from the trip location, may be able to assist in accommodating special needs. They should be aware of things such as, wheelchair accessible trails, wheelchair accessible restrooms, trail guides experienced with leading the visually impaired, written scripts for nature hikes, etc. There may also be local organizations which serve individuals with special needs. These organizations may be able to assist with not only planning accessible events, but also with securing any necessary equipment to make accommodation possible. AHG also offers a number of resources for working with girls with special needs. Contact your Member Services Representative for more information on AHG's Special Needs Training, resources and ideas.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Because the earth belongs to the Lord, we need to be good stewards of it. For this reason, AHG strives to practice Outdoor Ethics and Environmental Stewardship through all its outdoor adventures. Not only does Environmental Stewardship work to protect what is God's, it also works to respect others who seek to enjoy nature, by leaving it in as pristine a condition as it was found. Outdoor ethics call for us to treat our time in nature as though we are visiting a neighbor's house, or in our case, God's house. We would never visit our neighbor's house and destroy her flower gardens, write our name on her living room wall or chop down a tree in her front yard. These same principles apply when we are spending time in nature.

AHG asks all members to practice minimum-impact principles when spending time in the out of doors. Minimum-impact means making choices that leave the least possible impact on the environment. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics outlines 7 principles for minimum-impact outdoor adventures. They include:

**“The earth is
the LORD's, and
everything in it,
the world, and
all who live in it;”
*Psalm 24:1***

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare**

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

- **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.

- **In popular areas:**

- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
- Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.

- **In pristine areas:**

- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
- Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

- **Dispose of Waste Properly**

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and

trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.

- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

- Leave What You Find

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

- Minimize Campfire Impacts

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the backcountry. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

- Respect Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises

Being an environmental steward, and protecting what is God's is not difficult, but does require awareness during both the planning and implementation of an outdoor adventure. Keeping these principles in mind while planning will help to ensure that all AHG activities coincide with Outdoor Ethics and Environmental Stewardship. Teaching girls to be environmental stewards now, will not only teach them important principles about respecting what God has given them, but also help to preserve the opportunity for tomorrow's American Heritage Girls to explore nature!

PART 3 STEPS TO PLANNING

Though planning varies with each activity and region of the country, there are six main areas that need to be considered when planning the logistics of an outdoor adventure. Whether you are in California or Maine, addressing these areas will help ensure that you are offering your girls a well-planned trip.

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES

Adhering to Health & Safety Guidelines is critical to conducting a safe, enjoyable outing. These guidelines protect the girls, the Leaders, Charter Partners and AHG, Inc. Be sure to consult AHG's Health & Safety Guidelines located in the Coordinator and Unit Leader Handbooks, and on AHGsource. AHG activities are divided into three categories: Unrestricted Activities, Restricted High Adventure Activities and Unauthorized Activities. With each category comes a unique set of guidelines. Be sure to consult the Health and Safety section of the Handbook to determine guidelines associated with the planned activity. Though guidelines differ with each outdoor activity, there are four main areas of Health and Safety that need to be considered when planning an outdoor event.

1. **PAPERWORK** – Has all the necessary paperwork been completed? For a complete listing of AHG forms and their uses, please refer to the Unit Leader Handbook.

a. **Registration** – All girls must be registered prior to attending an AHG outdoor program.

b. **Permission Slips** - A “Parent/Guardian Permission Slip” must be completed for any field trip, Troop trip, camping trip, outing, etc.

c. **Medical Forms** – Medical forms are important in being aware of severe allergies, medical conditions, limitations and medications – all of which can impact outdoor program planning and implementation.

i. A “*Health and Medical History Form*” must be on file for all adult and youth participants. These forms need to be updated on an annual basis.

ii. A “*High Adventure Activity Medical Form*” must be on file for all adult and youth participating in an activity AHG defines as “Restricted High Adventure Activities.” These forms must be updated on an annual basis

d. **Troop Transport Forms** – All adults driving for AHG events must have a form on file with the Troop.

e. **AHG, Inc. Notification** – depending on the activity, a notification may need to be filed with AHG, Inc. Office.

Typically, these notifications must arrive at the office so it is important to plan ahead. Please refer to the Unit Leader Handbook for a listing of activities which require AHG, Inc. Notification.

2. **ADULT SUPERVISION** – AHG Girl/Leader ratios must be adhered to during all outdoor activities.

a. See Health and Safety Section of the Unit Leader Handbook for ratios. Please note that some specialized activities require different ratios.

3. **SPECIALTY CERTIFICATIONS** – All AHG functions require at least 1 CPR/First-Aid Certified Leader per Unit.

a. See Health and Safety Section of the Unit Leader Handbook for additional certifications required (lifeguards, specialty instructors, etc.). Please note that required certifications vary with each activity.

4. NECESSARY REPORTING

In the event of an emergency, AHG, Inc. must be notified within 24 hours of the incident. Notification should occur via submission of an “*Incident Report Form*”, along with a follow-up phone call. Incident Report must be completed in a thorough manner, including all necessary signatures and contact information. Incidents that require reporting include:

- Any injury or illness that required EMS care
- Any injury or illness that results in hospitalization
- Any incident/occurrence of a missing AHG participant
- Any incident/occurrence of an encounter with a suspicious or seemingly dangerous stranger

All media inquiries regarding an incident occurring during an AHG event, must be directed to the AHG, Inc. Office. The Incident Report Form is available on AHGsource > Troop Management> Health & Safety.

RESEARCH

It is important to investigate the area in which you are planning on visiting, prior to your arrival. Not knowing an important policy, closing, etc. can prove very disappointing to a van full of girls. Typically researching an area only takes a few phone calls or clicks of the mouse – a small price to pay for the peace of mind of knowing the area ahead of time.

PERMITS

Many parks require permits for particular activities. Contacting an area park ranger or Department of Natural Resources employee will inform you if you need to acquire a permit prior to camping, hiking, climbing, fishing, parking, etc. Permits serve as a way of controlling human impact on an area, funding upkeep of recreational

areas, as well as ways to track arrival and departure of visitors for safety purposes – it is important that AHG Troops adhere to permit policies.

REGULATIONS

Many camping, hiking and park areas have specific regulations that need to be known prior to troop arrival.

CAMPFIRES: It is important to find out if campfires are allowed, and if so, where is acceptable to create one. Some areas in the nation have fire bans, especially during certain dry times of the year. If campfires are not permitted, camp stoves may be an outdoor cooking option. Be sure to check with local officials regarding the use of camp stoves or other portable cooking devices.

FIREWOOD: Many areas, especially in the Midwest, have restrictions regarding the carrying in of firewood. Recent introductions of non-native insects have unleashed havoc on many natural areas. If you are planning on bringing in your own firewood, be sure to call ahead. Areas that do not allow “foreign” firewood will often offer the purchase of “native” firewood. Native firewood can typically also be collected on the grounds.

GARBAGE: Some areas require specific disposal of garbage. Knowing this information ahead of time can save a headache later.

PARKING/VEHICLES: Be sure to know the areas parking and vehicle guidelines. Are there limitations on the number of vehicles permitted on site? Are there specific places where you are required to park?

GROUP SIZE: Calling ahead can help ensure that there are no limits to the number of individuals permitted to camp, hike, paddle, etc together. Some areas limit group size in an effort to minimize human impact on the environment. Limited group sizes may require you to reserve multiple campsites, secure additional supervision or equipment.

SEASONAL CLOSURES: Once a date has been chosen for the outdoor adventure, it is important to check that the area you are traveling to will be open. Seasonal closures can occur for a number of reasons: High/Low water conditions, snow closures, dangerously dry conditions, Hunting season, special events, area maintenance, etc.

ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER

The availability of drinking water is crucial to any outdoor adventure. Knowing if there are drinking water facilities available will inevitably impact equipment needs and even the duration or difficulty of the trip. Ensure that drinking water will be available during the specific time of trip and always plan on packing a “backup” water source. For day and even some overnight trips, packing water may be an option. For trips where pack weight and size are an issue, water purification systems can be brought instead. Water purification systems do require a water source, so ensure that there is a body of water available for water collection.

It is recommended that individuals consume at least 2 quarts of water, plus 1 quart of other liquids, each day while outdoors. “Other liquids” may include a Gatorade-type produce, Emergen-C, etc. Liquids such as soda and tea should be avoided as they are diuretics and will actually hinder hydration. The amount of needed liquid increases as the level of exertion or temperature increases. It is easiest for the body to handle small amounts of water at one time, rather than gulping it down a quart at a time. Encourage participants to drink often. Once the feeling of thirst hits, your body is already low of fluids.

There are a variety of water purification methods. The chosen method should be based upon the conditions encountered on the trip, as well as the available equipment. Some methods of purification include:

- Boiling Water
- Chemical Purification (iodine, chlorine)
- UV Light Purifier
- Water Filters

TOILETING PROCEDURES

Knowing what type of toileting facilities are available will determine equipment choices and may impact what aged girls should participate in the activity. If bathhouses, latrines or outhouses are available, is toilet paper provided?

AHG recommends a minimum of one toileting facility per every 20 participants. If permanent toileting facilities are not available, it will be important that all participants understand the proper procedures for creating catholes and/or latrines. Toileting in the outdoors can bring about a lot of anxiety (in both adults and youth) and should be addressed prior to the trip. Participants that are frightened to toilet face a risk of serious health concerns, as well as a less enjoyable experience. Open discussion of these issues will help all participants feel more comfortable with this often sensitive issue. For older girls, it will also be important to discuss the use of feminine hygiene products while in the outdoors. Proper disposal and sanitary practices are important in keeping all participants healthy and comfortable.

If an existing toilet is available, AHG participants should use the established facility in an effort to minimize impact. Though they can be smelly, they significantly minimize the impact of toileting on the environment. If an existing toilet is not available, urination may occur at least 200 feet away from any water source, campsite, or trail. Urine has a relatively small impact on the environment, but choosing to urinate on rocks, or areas of thick drainage (such as a pile of leaves or a pile of dirt) will help disperse the urine. Avoid urinating directly on plants, especially fragile vegetation. Diluting the urine with water may help minimize animal attraction. If you are using toilet paper, be sure to pack it out.

Feces leaves a much larger impact on the environment. It can contaminate water sources and spread disease, therefore AHG recommends using one of the following techniques:

- **Cathole:** A small hole, at least 6 inches deep and at least 200 feet from any water source, campsite or trail. Catholes are used only once, and the covered with soil and packed down tight. All toilet paper and feminine hygiene products should be packed out. Catholes are the preferred toileting method, unless the group is quite large.
- **Latrine:** A long trench, twelve inches deep. Girls start at one end, and cover their waste after each use. When the trench is full to within four inches of the surface, cover it and start another. Again, pack out all paper products. Due to the environmental impact, the creation of latrines is discouraged unless your group is large, or you have younger girls that will be staying at the same site for an extended amount of time.

Information adapted from Outdoor Living Skills Field Guide

Anytime a toilet is created, when finished it should be covered up well enough that it looks as though no one was there. It is important to encourage all participants to clean their hands after toileting. Hand sanitizer is an effective, water-saving method. If using soap and water, ensure that the soap is biodegradable.

WEATHER

It is important to anticipate possible weather patterns that may be encountered while on an outdoor adventure. Checking weather forecasts prior to trip departure can provide valuable information. During the planning stages, it may be helpful to look at area temperature averages. Overnight lows and daytime highs will impact equipment and clothing choices. If severe weather is predicted, alterations may need to be made to trip and/or activity plans. During times of year when weather can be unpredictable, it will be important to have access to a weather radio or other weather detection device - a small National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radio is helpful for learning current weather forecasts. Troop participants (both adult and youth) should be familiar with emergency procedures if inclement weather should arise.

The type and likelihood of serious weather varies within each region of the United States. It is important to be aware of what types of weather may be a possibility in the activity area. Some forms of serious weather include, thunderstorms, snow storms, tornadoes, hail, flash floods, hurricanes, etc.

Lightning is a fairly common occurrence and can be extremely dangerous. Places to avoid during a lightning storm include:

- Summits, or places that are the highest location around: If found in this situation, quickly descend to a lower elevation, in the opposite direction of the approaching storm.
- Beside isolated or tallest trees: If found in this situation, try to move quickly to a group of lower trees or assume the lightning position.
- An open field, where you are the tallest object: If found in this situation, try to find a low-lying area or assume the lightning position.
- On/in water: Immediately return to shore.

If a building or a car is available, immediately retreat to this shelter. Dense forests, located in a depression can be good place to wait out a storm. If the storm is less than six miles away (or the time between thunder and lightning is less than 30 seconds), assume the lightning position. Crouch, with your feet close together and your bottom off the ground. Do not place your hands on the ground. If you have access to insulating material (such as a sleeping pad, or backpack), crouch on it. Avoid the temptation to crouch together during a storm. Participants should spread out, 15-20 feet apart. Be sure that group members are visible and that spreading out does not put anyone into a danger zone.

More information regarding inclement weather guidelines is located in the Coordinator Handbook. It is important to be aware of these guidelines prior to the onset of serious weather.

TOPOGRAPHY

Whenever possible, terrain should be traversed by leadership prior to trip. If planning a hiking trip, is the inclination and depression of the land appropriate to girls age, ability and physical fitness level? Are there steep cliffs, raging rivers or other topography that would make the route unsafe? If it is impossible for Troop Leadership to visit the site prior to the trip, it is important to consult topographical maps, trail maps or local authorities (park rangers, etc.) to determine the difficulty of the terrain. For both enjoyment and safety, it is crucial that the route match girl ability.

Locating a topographic map of the area may help point out difficult terrain prior to the trip. On topographic maps, contour lines depict the three-dimensional nature of the land on a two-dimensional surface. Contour lines represent equal points of height above sea level.

- *Steep Slopes* – contour lines are closely spaced
- *Valleys* – contour lines form a V pointing up the hill. “Vs” should be considered in planning, as they are always an indication of a drainage path, and possibly a stream or river.
- *Ridges* – contour lines form a V pointing down the hill.

HAZARDS

When possible, knowing potential hazards of the activity prior to arrival will aid in planning, equipment choices, and emergency planning. Are there poisonous plants or animals that girls should be made aware of prior to the trip? Are there bears, skunks, raccoons or other animals in the area that require special procedures with food and garbage? Are there rivers prone to flooding? Knowing potential hazards ahead of time will aid in the ability to avoid these hazards. Consult local park rangers, naturalists or Department of Natural Resources employees to determine hazards specific to the activity area. Some hazards to consider include:

Rabies: According to the CDC, “Rabies is a preventable viral disease of mammals most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The vast majority of rabies cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year occur in wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats, and foxes.” While rabies is

a serious disease, few humans contract it. CDC reports an average of 1-2 humans per year that contract the disease. The most common source of rabies are bats. The best way to prevent exposure to rabies is to avoid contact with wild animals. For more information on rabies visit the CDC website.

Hazardous Plants: The presence of hazardous plants varies with geographical region, so it is important to identify plants that may be located in the area of activity. Some plants that are harmful to the touch include, poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, and stinging nettle. Many plants found in the wild are harmful and even fatal to ingest. Participants should never be allowed to eat wild plants, unless an edible plant expert is present.

Hazardous Animals: All wild animals have the potential to be hazardous, and therefore should be treated with great respect and caution. It is important to be aware of hazardous species found in the activity area, and equally important to be able to identify those species. Snakes and spiders are particularly important to recognize. Some common poisonous snakes include, rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths and coral snakes. Some common poisonous spiders include, brown recluse, black widow and wolf spiders. Some marine animals, such as jellyfish, can also be hazardous. If you are traveling in bear country it is important to know what to do in the event of a bear encounter.

If serious hazards exist, that cannot be avoided and pose a serious danger to participants, the trip should be cancelled, rescheduled or moved to a more safe location. As with all decisions, the health and safety of the girls should come first.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is an important and potentially hazardous part of any outdoor adventure. Full transportation guidelines should be reviewed in the Health and Safety section of the Coordinator/Unit Leader Handbook. A few guidelines to keep in mind when planning the transportation piece of an outdoor adventure:

- All drivers must complete a *“Troop Transport Form”* and meet requirements for driving according to AHG's Health & Safety Guidelines.
- All girls being transported must have a *“Parent/Guardian Permission Slip”* on file.
- AHG Girl/Leader Ratios must be adhered to during transportation.
- All vehicles must have a charged cell phone in case of emergency.
- Seat belts must be worn by driver and all passengers
- Drivers must have a list of all girls in their car, as well as a list of girls being transported in other vehicles.
- Copies of girls' medical forms must be present in the vehicle in which they are riding.
- A quick reference list should be created including any potentially hazardous medical conditions of passengers (ie. Severe allergies, epilepsy, asthma, etc.)
- A first-aid kit should be present in all vehicles used to transport girls.

SITE SELECTION & FOOD SERVICE

Two important planning issues include where to go and what to eat. Site and food selection impact not only equipment needs but activity planning as well. Site selection and food service are closely related to the research section, including permits, regulations, access to water and toileting facilities, topography and hazards. Both selecting a site and providing appropriate food service will be covered in detail during the Outdoor Classroom Workshops. Important considerations for these areas include:

SITE SELECTION: Whenever possible, it is beneficial to visit the site prior to the planned activity. Viewing the site will allow time to plan for any necessary changes to equipment, site or activity based on what is discovered during the site visit. The internet is also a great place to go to access current information on the location you have

selected. Many parks' websites include area maps, trail maps and condition alerts. In selecting an appropriate site for an outdoor activity, consider the following:

- The Use of the Site

Questions to Ask:

- Will this site be used for a specific activity?
- Will there be food service on site?
- Will tents need to be utilized on the site?
- Will canoes or other large equipment need to be stored on the site?
- Will a campfire be needed?
- Are toileting facilities available, or will they need to be created?
- How many participants will need to utilize the site?

- Characteristics of a good site

General

- Free of serious hazards
- Adequate space for all participants
- Adequate space for planned activity
- Access to toileting facilities
- Access to potable water
- Access to shelter in case of emergency
- Accessible for all participants

Camping

- All of "General"
- Access to fire ring, if necessary
- Adequate area to separate cooking from sleeping
- Level ground for tents, if necessary
- Adequate sleeping space
- Adequate area for food storage

Hiking

- All of "General"
- Trail difficulty appropriate to participant age, ability and fitness level

Paddling

- All of "General"
- Appropriate put in areas
- Areas available along route to come ashore for breaks, food, etc.
- Areas requiring portaging appropriate to participant age, ability and fitness level.
- Water conditions are appropriate to participant age, ability and fitness level.

Upon arrival to the site, set up of an efficient, organized site will aid in the success of the outdoor adventure, as well as cut down on potential safety hazards.

FOOD SERVICE: The preparation and consumption of food is not only necessary for survival, but also allows for a variety of learning experiences for girls. Cooking in the outdoors can be an exciting and rewarding experience. Planning for food service is crucial to any outdoor adventure. This planning dictates the menu, rationing and equipment needs. Consider the following questions when planning for food service:

- **What meals will need to be provided?**
- **How many individuals will be eating each meal?**
- **What food requirements will there be? Caloric/nutritional needs? Dietary restrictions/allergies?**

It is important to know what dietary restrictions and/or allergies exist within the group. Severe food allergies

can be life and death, so should be taken seriously when planning a menu. Caloric and nutritional needs also need to be considered, especially when there is an increase in activity. NOLS suggests the following guidelines:

- 1.5 lbs of food (or 2,500 – 3,000 calories) per person, per day for hot days and warm nights.
- 1.75-2 lbs of food (or 3,000- 3,500 calories) per person, per day for warm or cool days and nights, or when hiking with a full pack.
- 2 – 2.25 lbs of food (or 3,500 – 4,000 calories) per person, per day for hiking or skiing on cool days and cold nights
- If planning a trip that lasts 7 or more days, plan for the higher amount of suggested food, as participants tend to grow more hungry as the trip progresses. Due to this increase in food need and the sheer amount of supplies needed, it is recommended that a food drop be coordinated prior to departure to deliver supplies needed for day eight and beyond. Additional food and supplies can be dropped off by a friend, or even mailed to a specific Post Office along your route. The important part is that you plan ahead.

- ***Can perishable ingredients be taken? Will there be access to refrigeration? Are coolers a viable option?***

- ***What type of cooking heat sources will be available?*** Will fires (wood or charcoal), campstoves, or solar ovens be used? Based on these heat sources, what type of food options are available? Based on these heat sources, how will equipment needs change?

- ***Are there restrictions for storing food, based on environmental or site guidelines? Are there bears in the area?***

The presence of bears requires specific food storage for the safety not only of the group, but its equipment and the bear as well. Some areas supply bear boxes for storage of food (or any other scented items, such as shampoos, chapstick, etc.). If bear boxes are not supplied, food will need to be hung.

- ***What clean up and sanitation procedures are necessary?***

Clean up and sanitation is even more critical in the outdoors where the presence of wild animals and lack of modern conveniences demand vigilance. Proper clean up of the cooking and eating areas will help avoid unwanted late night visits from animals. Proper sanitation of cooking and eating equipment will help cut down the risk of sickness, contamination and the spread of illness. For more information on clean up and sanitation procedures please refer to the Outdoor Classroom Workshops.

Efficient planning of cooking methods, menus and needed equipment will help cut down on the amount of time needed to be spent with food prep and clean up. Planning will ensure that all ingredients and equipment arrive and that all participants receive the sustenance that they require during their great adventure.

EQUIPMENT

Packing the needed equipment for an outdoor adventure is crucial not only to its success, but also to its safety. All equipment should be in good, working order. Maintenance, thorough cleaning and proper storage are key to keeping equipment in good condition. Many Troops budget to purchase Troop equipment that they will use often, such a cooking pots, compasses or tents. For equipment that is used rarely, or is too expensive for troop purchase, check with local outfitters regarding options to rent equipment. Asking Troop parents, or Charter Organizations, is another great way to collect necessary equipment. Access to equipment may alter your plans, so be sure to plan ahead in order to assure that all necessary equipment will be available.

Equipment needs vary with a number of factors, including:

- **Planned activities:** Is there specialized equipment needed for the activities planned?
- **Age and ability of girls:** Will girls be able to carry a large amount of gear? Are girls old enough to be cooking over a campfire?
- **Number in group:** The more people attending the event, the more equipment needed.
- **Duration of trip:** Will this be a 2-hour hike, or a 2-week backpacking trip?
- **Terrain & Site:** Will equipment weight impact the ability to traverse terrain? Does the site limit the size/number of tents?
- **Weather:** Is it forecasted to be cold at night? Does it often rain unexpectedly during this time of year?
- **Access to toileting facilities:** Are toileting facilities available, or will they have to be created? Is toilet paper provided?
- **Access to potable water:** Will water be available? Will water or a water purification system need to be carried in?
- **Menu choices:** How many meals will be needed? What type of heat source will be used? Based on planned activities, how many calories will each participant require?
- **Area regulations/guidelines:** Does the area require certain equipment be used? Are there specific forms of garbage disposal, or food storage that require additional equipment?

A few pieces of Troop equipment that are crucial to any outdoor adventure include:

- Girl Health and Medical History Forms
- Emergency Contact Information
- First Aid Kit (See Health & Safety section of Coordinator/Unit Leader Handbook for contents)
- Electronic Communication Device (such as a cell phone) in case of emergency

In addition to Troop equipment, there will be some equipment that girls will have to provide and pack for themselves. It is important to provide girls (and parents) with a detailed packing list, to ensure that all girls arrive to the activity with all they need to have a great time!

It is crucial that girls arrive with appropriate clothing and footwear. Being too cold, too hot or having feet covered in blisters can quickly ruin a girl's outdoor experience.

Encourage girls to dress utilizing layers. Layers help keep the body warm and dry, and also allow for the removal of some layers as heat dictates. The types of layers chosen will depend on both the weather conditions and the activity. There are six basic layers that can be adjusted based on conditions:

- **LAYER 1: BASE/WICKING LAYER**

This layer is meant to keep the skin comfortable and dry. Materials used in the base layer should assist with transporting moisture (usually from perspiration) away from the skin. This layer should be quick drying. In cool weather, layers should fit snugly, providing insulation, and in warm weather should be loose-fitting to assist with ventilation and drying.

- **LAYER 2: INSULATING LAYER**

This layer's job is to create air space that will assist in insulation and to a certain degree assist with wicking away moisture. There may be up to 3 or more insulating layers in extremely cold conditions. The first insulating layer is usually shirt and pants. Any clothing that can open/close is useful for ventilation during exertion. Fleece, wool, down and synthetic fibers are all good insulating materials.

- **LAYER 3: SHELL LAYERS**

This layer is used as protection from wind, rain, snow and sun and usually consists of a jacket and pants. Windproof and water-resistant or water-proof materials are ideal for this layer. This protection from the elements will prove essential in regulating body temperature and ensuring comfort.

- **LAYER 4: HEAD LAYER**

This layer works to protect the body from rain, sun and heat loss. Depending on the weather, a wool hat for

winter, a wide-brimmed hat for rain or sun, hats can be a useful tool in layering.

- LAYER 5: HAND LAYER

This layer is used to protect the hands from cold. Choosing gloves or mittens during cold conditions will protect your hands from frostbite and heat loss.

- LAYER 6: FEET LAYER

This layer helps not only with temperature regulation, but also blister prevention. Using a lightweight, synthetic liner sock will assist with wicking moisture away from the foot. A second thicker sock layer of wool or a synthetic hiking sock, will assist in cushioning the foot, as well as keeping it warm. These two layers allow the friction of the boot to rub between the socks, rather than your skin and will reduce the occurrence of blistering. Cotton socks should be avoided as they tend to absorb moisture and keep feet in a wet condition. Packing extra socks is also key to layering success.

If on an overnight adventure, ensure that girls do not sleep in the clothes they have been active in all day. Residual moisture left from the days activities can lead to a very cold and uncomfortable night. Changing into a dry set of clothes will help girls stay warm through the night.

Encourage girls to plan for a variety of weather. If there is the slightest chance of rain, or if your area is known for pop-up showers, be sure that girls pack rain gear. If an evening chill is expected, ask girls to pack a winter hat and even a jacket. Girls should also pack a head covering, especially if they will spend an extended amount of time in the woods or sun. Ticks and the diseases they carry, such as Lyme Disease, can be a serious risk in some parts of the country, and wearing a hat or bandana, along with long socks can help protect girls. Hats and bandanas can also be helpful in keeping hair back during outdoor skills, such as fire building, and assist in body heat regulation.

Footwear is important, not only in keeping girls comfortable, but also in keeping them safe. Footwear choices should match the activity. Hiking boots, or supportive tennis shoes for hiking. Boots, with a heel for horseback riding. Non-slip, secure sandals for water sports. With the exception of the shower house, there is never an instance where flip flops are appropriate outdoor apparel. Being barefoot during an outdoor experience is also not acceptable. Even in instances of swimming (in a natural body of water), girls should wear water shoes or a pair of socks to help protect their feet from jagged rocks, mussels, etc. Remember to follow the “Feet Layer” guidelines above when choosing socks, especially when participating in long hikes.

Girls should also have a personal water source, especially for activities that require a high amount of physical exertion or during hot weather conditions. Having individual water bottles (that can be filled with Troop water source) allow girls access to water when they need it and also help to cut down on the sharing of germs.

Girls should also be prepared with personal bug and sun protection. Depending on the region of the nation, bugs can be not only an annoyance, but a health concern as well. Sun protection is important in all types of temperatures. Sun screen and/or protective sun hats/clothing are important in keeping girls safe from sun burn and sun poisoning, as well as protecting them from the long term effects of sun exposure.

PACKING TIPS

How equipment is packed depends heavily on (a.) the activity and (b.) the type of equipment. For instance, paddling trips require all equipment to be packed in water proof packaging, and backpacking trips require careful consideration of equipment weight. In general, the more the equipment list is consolidated, the easier it will be to transport and keep track of equipment.

A few general packing tips include:

- Consider packing outfits together, rather than separating socks from shirts, etc. This makes for quick morning prep and also assists in the dark.
- Consider transferring food items out of their original packages and into more space efficient storage. Packing all ingredients to a certain dish or meal together, including the recipe can help save time and space.
- Consider packing everything in waterproof or water resistant packaging. Even plastic bags can help keep

clothes and equipment dry despite morning dew or rain.

- Pack extra plastic bags to use for dirty, wet clothes or protection from the elements.
- Be sure that the flashlight or headlight is packed in an easily accessible area.
- Additional tips located in the “Packing a Backpack” section

BACKPACKS: Backpacks are a great way to carry gear, even for non-backpacking trips. Backpacks provide a large amount of spaces, with an effective carrying system. It is important to have a well-fitted backpack and to ensure that the backpack is not too heavy for the participant. Typically it is recommended that the weight of a packed backpack not exceed 15% - 20% of a person’s body weight. There are two types of backpacks to choose from: Internal Frame and External Frame. There are also smaller packs called “daypacks” that are great for day trips.

The weight of a packed backpack should not exceed 15%-20% of a person’s body weight.

FITTING A BACKPACK: It is important, whenever possible to fit the pack when it is full. A pack should not extend above the head or below the buttocks. The hip belt of the backpack should fit around the hip bones, with the buckle falling near the navel. Next, the shoulder straps should be adjusted so that they fit snugly, without pinching the skin. For internal frame packs, the frame should extend 2-4 inches above the shoulder, and for an external frame pack, the straps should come off the frame about even with the shoulders. The chest strap should come across the chest just below the collar bone. All buckles and snaps should be far enough away from the skin as not to chafe. Many companies offer backpacks designed specifically for a woman’s anatomy. Older girls and adults may find these packs particularly comfortable.

PACKING A BACKPACK: It is important to properly load a backpack as to avoid equipment damage, muscle strain and fatigue. If the route traversed is expected to be generally flat, the heavier items should sit between the shoulder blades, causing the weight to be high and close to the body. If the terrain is expected to be steep or rough, the heavy things should be in the lower area of the back, in order to place the weight lower and assist with balance.

A few other packing tips include:

- Consider what items will be needed during the day, and make them easily accessible.
- Stuff clothes in sacks or plastic bags, rather than folding. This makes the most of the available space, while providing protective cushioning for fragile equipment.
- Pack dirty and/or wet clothes in a separate plastic bag, away from food and clean clothes.
- If carrying fuel, pack below and away from any food items. If separate, side pockets are available, those should be used for fuel.
- Line the compartments of your pack with garbage bags, or use a pack rain cover to protect your gear from precipitation.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Whether you are planning a day trip or 2-week outdoor adventure, developing an emergency preparedness plan is critical in response to a crisis. Risk can be reduced significantly by simply being prepared. It is important that emergency procedures are clearly communicated with all trip leadership, and that each individual understands his/her role in an emergency. By following the planning steps outlined earlier, most potential hazards, and therefore emergencies will be planned for, and therefore can be avoided.

CREATING AN EPP

STEP ONE: Make a list of all the man-made and natural hazards that you identified during previous planning steps. Be sure to include weather, dangerous plants/animals, known medical conditions, injury, missing participant and uninvited strangers.

STEP TWO: Discuss each scenario and what steps would need to be followed. Scenarios will depend on the activity and area. Some scenarios to consider include:

- *Inclement weather:* Lightning, Tornado, Flood, Snow Storm
- *Injury:* Plan for minor and serious scenarios
- *Illness:* Allergic reaction, medical condition, minor sickness
- *Snake, Spider or Animal Bites*
- *Missing Participant*
- *Uninvited Stranger*

Decide who does what, when. For instance, who calls 911? If the emergency is out on the trail or lake, how is 911 accessed? Will emergency vehicles have access to your area? If not, who can allow access, or direct vehicles to the appropriate area? Where do the girls go who are not involved in the emergency? Who is supervising them? Who leaves to be sure 911 is called? Who is responsible to call the parent(s)/guardian(s)? Assign responsibilities to each adult leader, and girl participants (if necessary).

STEP THREE: Gather all necessary information (such as emergency numbers, location of activity, number and names of participants, Troop communication liaison, AHG, Inc. contact, area map, etc.) and make copies of this information available to all adult participants.

STEP FOUR: Leave a copy of your emergency preparedness plan with a Troop Parent who is not attending the event, as well as with your Support Services Coordinator. In addition to your Emergency Prep Plan, be sure to leave a detailed itinerary of Troop activities, locations and timeframes. Establish a communication system to notify all parents in the event of an emergency. A phone tree is an effective method of notification.

REPORTING AN EMERGENCY EVENT

In the event of an emergency, AHG, Inc. must be notified within 24 hours of the incident.

Notification should occur via submission of an Incident Report form, along with a follow-up phone call. Incidents that require reporting include:

- Any injury or illness that required EMS care
- Any injury or illness that results in hospitalization
- Any incident/occurrence of a missing AHG participant
- Any incident/occurrence of an encounter with a suspicious or seemingly dangerous stranger

All media inquiries regarding an incident occurring during an AHG event, must be directed to the AHG, Inc. Office. For a copy of the incident report, visit [AHGsource > Troop Management > Health & Safety](#).

INVOLVING GIRLS IN PLANNING

Involving girls in the planning of your outdoor adventure will not only help to make it memorable, it will also teach valuable leadership, planning and safety skills. Girls of all ages can take part and the Patrol System is especially effective for planning these types of activities. With adult oversight, older girls can plan an entire camping trip from beginning to end!

When girls help with the planning, they also have a better understanding of what will be happening on their adventure, which can often help decrease the fear factor. It is imperative that girls are told about the expectations of the event prior to the event! Not only will this assist the girls, but it will cut down on behavior problems significantly. It is also helpful to have the girls come up with the rules for the event (with adult guidance of course). Not only will this help them understand expectations, but also help them feel a sense ownership and buy in. Be sure to talk about why each rule is important as you work through them. It is also important that all adults participating in the event know and understand rules, expectations and appropriate discipline. Discipline is important in the outdoors as there are many new risks and hazards. Try to strike a careful balance between rules and freedom to explore. Our number one priority is to keep girls safe, but we don't want to take away the awe and wonder of

nature by heaping on the rules. Balance is key! It is important to discuss discipline with your adult chaperones before you head outdoors. Your discipline procedures for an outdoor activity should align with your Troop policies, AHG's Mission and the AHG Health & Safety Guidelines and always have the girl's best interests at heart.

The planning process is also a great time to reiterate the importance of the buddy system. Utilize buddies for even the simplest activities and it will become a healthy habit for the girls and help prevent girls from getting lost while in the outdoors.

Psalms 104: "Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth. He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate-- bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees. The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coneys. The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening. How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number-- living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works--he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD."



The Indoor Classroom and corresponding resources have been a collaboration of many dedicated volunteers and staff members. AHG would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions: *Kathy Frye, Terry Hale, Darrell Frye, Debbie Donovan, Shelley Jones, Gloria Sibray, Patti Garibay, Kathi Sacha, Donna Hillebrand, Erin Frye, Katie Donovan, Greg Schmidt, and Rachael Culpepper.*

The Indoor Classroom has also referenced the following wonderful resources. These resources are a great place to look for more detailed information and continued learning:

Curtis, Rick. The Backpacker's Field Manual: A comprehensive guide to mastering backcountry skills. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005.

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Leave No Trace, Center for Outdoor Ethics