



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

WEATHER-RELATED SAFETY

SUMMARY

Robert Baden-Powell once said the definition of the Scout motto *Be Prepared* is this: “A Scout must prepare himself by previous thinking out and practicing how to act on any accident or emergency so that he is never taken by surprise.” Baden-Powell also advocated that young men spend a lot of time learning in and about the out-of-doors, as he said, “The open-air is the real objective of Scouting and the key to its success.” However, we still need to be aware of our surroundings and their changing conditions, including what is happening with the weather.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Severe weather hazards, such as tornadoes, lightning, hail, flash flooding, and downbursts, can be dangerous. Each requires a basic understanding of what to do so that you can protect yourself and your Scouts. The scale of weather conditions can seem daunting—ranging from high heat with no humidity to torrential downpours with possible flooding. However, some key basic principles can help everyone prepare. Here are a few for you to consider:

1. Know the weather forecast before you set out on your trip.
2. Prepare for the types of weather hazards that are associated with your destination, such as tornadoes, lightning, snow, torrential rains, and high winds. The BSA's online Weather Hazards training (available through My.Scouting.org) is a great resource in this area and should be renewed every two years.
3. Double-check weather conditions immediately upon arrival to verify forecasts.
4. The weather can be integral in becoming lost or injured. If visibility becomes limited, respond quickly to gather the Scouts in your care.
5. Inquire about the location of any designated emergency shelters in the area.

You may never encounter a severe weather hazard. Your chances of being hit by lightning in your lifetime are 1 in 700,000, and the chances of your home being destroyed by a tornado (if you live in tornado alley) are 1 in 150,000. By learning and following these key principles, you can move forward with confidence and provide every opportunity to your Scouts to participate in Baden-Powell's outdoor laboratory.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Weather* merit badge pamphlet
- National Weather Service—www.weather.gov
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—www.noaa.gov
- Weather Wiz Kids—www.weatherwizkids.com
- Struck by Lightning—www.struckbylightning.org
- [Lightning Safety: An Interview With Sam Cloud](#) is a fun, four-minute training video focusing on teaching youth (and leaders) more about lightning safety.
- BSA's Scouting Safely—www.scouting.org/HealthandSafety