



BSA SAFETY MOMENT

FATAL FALL – NOLAN'S STORY

SUMMARY

Tragedy struck our Scouting family on Oct. 13, 2018, when Nolan Henderson, a 16-year-old Star Scout, was fatally injured while hiking and bouldering with his troop on Maiden Peak in the Cascade Range of central Oregon. An adult leader had started the hike with the youth. When younger youth wished to turn around, the leader returned to the base camp as well. Nolan and the remaining youth were allowed to continue up to the peak without adult supervision. When one of those youth got stuck during the ascent, Nolan went to his aid. After he scaled a shear face of the peak to help the other Scout to safety, a handhold gave way and Nolan tragically fell to his death.

LESSONS LEARNED

Scouting's two-deep adult supervision requirements, which exist both to prevent abuse and to safeguard against tragedies like these, were not followed.

- Adults supervise youth activities.
- Two-deep adult supervision by registered adult leaders 21 years of age or over are required for all Scouting activities. This includes patrol activities. These enhanced requirements have been in effect since October 2018.

Parents expect and demand that every activity is supervised by adults who help guide good decisions during an outing. This climb should have ceased when the adult supervisor went back to base camp.

Climb on Safely protocols — supervision, instruction, equipment, and an established safe area — were not in place for a climb or bouldering in this area.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Share Nolan's story before your next outing.
- Ensure that proper two-deep adult supervision is provided for all Scouting activities, especially those that might expose participants to a risk of serious injury or death.
- Utilize and review the four points of [SAFE](#) when delivering the Scouting program.
- Understand how changing terrain and conditions can cause unrecognized hazards that result in tragic consequences.
- On a hike, stay together. On the trail, be prepared:
 - Designate a pacesetter who leads at a speed comfortable for everyone in the group, followed by a navigator who makes sure the group is on course.
 - The hike should match the maturity, skill level, and fitness of participants.
 - Stop or turn back (as a group), if adverse conditions develop

RESOURCES

- Guide to Safe Scouting: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/toc/>
- Climbing Safety Moment: <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/climbing/>
- Campout Safety Checklist: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/campout_checklist.pdf
- Backpacking merit badge pamphlet: <https://www.scoutshop.org/backpacking-merit-badge-pamphlet-655139.html>
- Hiking merit badge pamphlet: <https://www.scoutshop.org/catalog/product/view/id/5199>
- Fatal Falls Incident Review: https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/pdf/680-056_FatalFalls.pdf