BSA SAFETY MOMENT
ASTHMA

SUMMARY
Each day in the U.S., 10 people die from asthma. Asthma is a chronic lung disease that can worsen at any time and for many different reasons. When it is effectively controlled, it should not interfere with a person’s activity; however, when not controlled, it can cause life-threatening symptoms.

GENERAL INFORMATION
Prepared leaders:
• Review each Annual Health and Medical Record for health issues, including asthma, before an event.
• Understand the asthma action plan developed by the parent and youth with their health-care provider.
• Know the person’s asthma triggers and when to get advanced medical care, especially for remote locations.
• Become familiar with rescue medications and usage.

Asthma symptoms often include:
• Shortness of breath
• Wheezing
• Coughing
• Chest tightness

Symptoms may be severe enough to limit activity or even result in death if left untreated. Asthma symptoms may be triggered by exercise or cold air. Youth, parents, and adult leaders should be very familiar with the individual’s triggers and prescribed medications. Rescue medication should always be readily available.

The more medications a person needs to reduce asthma symptoms typically means the more difficult it is to control. The need for steroids (prednisone, Decadron, etc.) or injections indicates the asthma is hard to control and the person will be more likely to have symptoms and difficulty with some activities.

TREATMENT
The treatment of asthma depends upon its severity. Those with mild disease may only require a rescue inhaler to use when needed, while others will require long-term control medications. It is very important that a person follows the recommendations of their health-care provider. Commonly used asthma medications may include:

**Rescue medications**
- Albuterol (ProAir, Proventil, Ventolin)
- Levalbuterol (Xopenex)
- Epinephrine auto-injector (EpiPen, Adrenaclick, and others)

**Controller medications**
- Steroid inhalers (Asmanex, Flovent, Pulmicort, Qvar)
- Combination inhalers (Advair, AirDuo, Breo, Symbicort)
- Oral medications (Singulair, Accolate, theophylline)

RESOURCES
- Mayo Clinic—Asthma: [https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma/symptoms-causes/syc-20369653](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma/symptoms-causes/syc-20369653)
- Global Initiative for Asthma: [https://ginasthma.org/](https://ginasthma.org/)
- CHEST Foundation: [https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-resources/asthma](https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-resources/asthma)