



# BSA SAFETY MOMENT

## WILDERNESS FIRST AID

### SUMMARY

Being prepared in Scouting often means being ready to render first aid. As we go farther into the backcountry with our units, some additional training is needed. Wilderness first aid (WFA), the next step up from the basic first aid, focuses on teaching assessment skills and using available resources when professional responders may be hours or even days away. It can have a dramatic effect on the outcome of emergencies, injuries, and illnesses. It can mean the difference between life and death.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**What is WFA?** “Wilderness first aid” is a generic term that commonly refers to any training course that covers the prevention and treatment of injuries and illnesses that one may encounter in a remote environment. Many providers offer wilderness first aid courses, but not all courses are created equal—they vary in content, duration, accreditation, and other factors.

**Does the BSA have specific WFA requirements?** Yes. A BSA-led task force developed a WFA doctrine and curriculum specific to the BSA that teaches best practices to prevent, assess, and treat medical emergencies when in the backcountry—defined as being more than one hour away from definitive medical care. The BSA WFA course is a 16-hour certification suitable for participants ages 14 and older. The BSA’s curriculum includes not only classroom instruction but also a practical hands-on application in the form of practice scenarios. More important, it emphasizes that the safety of everyone involved is paramount, and it teaches participants how to gain control of an urgent situation so that resources (people, supplies, etc.) can be utilized appropriately.

**Do all WFA courses meet the BSA’s requirements?** No. Not all WFA courses are created equal. The BSA has identified the following providers as meeting the BSA’s requirements for WFA training: (1) American Red Cross, (2) Emergency Care & Safety Institute, and (3) providers accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA) under the ACA standard [HW.2.2/ST.3.2 First Aid & Emergency Care Personnel](#). WFA courses offered by any other provider do not meet the BSA’s requirements.

**Who needs to be WFA-trained?** Two members of each crew participating in a trek at Philmont Scout Ranch or one crew member at all other high-adventure bases operated by the BSA are *required* to have this certification. It is also recommended that troops or Venturing crews participating in any other high adventures, whether through a council or on their own, receive this training. Also, having more people on a high-adventure trek trained in WFA is always beneficial in the event that an emergency does occur.

**Are there any prerequisites or other certifications needed before taking WFA?** Being at least 14 years old and completing a CPR and AED certification course led by a nationally recognized provider are the only prerequisites. Having basic first-aid training is very helpful but it is not a prerequisite.

**Where can I find a BSA-approved course?** Start by contacting your local council or district. Locally available courses may also be found by contacting your local American Red Cross (ARC) chapter or by checking with the Emergency Care & Safety Institute (ECSI). Both the ARC and ECSI have authorized-provider training agreements with the BSA and course materials available to Scouts at reduced fees.

### RESOURCES

- BSA Wilderness First Aid home page: [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa/](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa/)
- BSA Wilderness First Aid FAQs: [www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa/faq/](http://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/training/wilderness-fa/faq/)
- American Camp Association: [www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org)
- American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr/wilderness-sports#wilderness-remote-first-aid](http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/cpr/wilderness-sports#wilderness-remote-first-aid)
- Emergency Care & Safety Institute: <http://boyscouts.ecsinstitute.org>