

NOVEMBER – SCOUT SAFETY

Music Full then Under

PAULA: Greetings, listeners. Thanks for tuning in to the November ScoutCast. The focus this month is very important to the BSA: Scout safety.

BRYAN: Now, in your time in Scouting, you've probably heard about a lot of BSA safety rules, but if you take time to read the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, you'll see there's a method to the madness.

PAULA: We asked Health and Safety Team Lead, Richard Bourlon, to explain some of these guidelines to us. And he did it so well, we asked him to explain it again right here on ScoutCast. So let's bring him on and see what all the fuss is about.

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PAULA: Here to share with us everything we need to know about how and why the BSA sets the safety guidelines is the team lead of the Health and Safety Service Team for the BSA National Service Center, Richard Bourlon. Welcome to ScoutCast, Richard.

RICHARD: Good to be here.

PAULA: Are these guidelines for the BSA program or for activities?

RICHARD: Safety is pretty much integrated into all of our program materials. So

when I say "program materials," that's the *Boy Scout Handbook* or leader materials. We actually have the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, too, that a lot of people point to when they think of safety in the Boy Scouts. There's also some things in there that are, actually, straight out of our policies. So, the Youth Protection Guidelines for example. That's not really a guideline per se. Our "Barriers to Abuse" don't have the ability to change. There's not a flexibility on no one-on-one contact.

BRYAN: Now, there's a lot of good stuff in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. And what I've always wondered is, who determines what goes in there, what's the safety risk, and then, what we're going to address with one of the guidelines.

RICHARD: Good question, Bryan. The *Guide to Safe Scouting*, and this is important, is not just a stand-alone safety document. It's a compendium of a lot of materials. It may be little excerpts from pieces of program materials that you, actually, have to go in and find stuff elsewhere, but it also may be things that just need a place to house like a policy on no medical marijuana for instance.

PAULA: So, let's get a little specific: What should leaders be doing to be prepared before an activity?

RICHARD: Having a plan is the key. Walking through something like the *Tour and Activity Plan* or *The Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety* or one of the campout or event checklists that's in the back of the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, it really is having a conversation about what you're going to do, what risks that you're going to face, and knowing those risks and then managing them along the way.

BRYAN: Now, the adult leader, a big part of their job is monitoring that safety and making sure that the Scouts are safe, right? But we know Scout troops and Venturing crews are supposed to be youth-led. Do they have a role in being prepared for safety before an activity?

RICHARD: You have boy-led activities, and so I'm going to answer this way: If you're running our program correctly, where you've got somebody who's trained, who's training another one - an older boy teaching a younger boy how to safely use an ax or sharpen a knife - that's actually core and part of our program. That's got built-in safety pieces where an adult who would be sitting back and watching to make sure that our policies were in place; that's all we're really looking for in this case. So that's really the way that youth get involved. The *Guide to Safe Scouting*, or *Safe Swim Defense* is part of advancement requirements. So woven throughout our program, if you will as we talked about earlier, are safety pieces that make the program run safely. It's just knowing the program and being able to execute that program to a level where you can teach others.

PAULA: Does it have to be a BSA-approved activity to qualify as having a guideline assigned to it?

RICHARD: I really kind of cringe when I hear "BSA-approved activity" because there's really not any. There are activities which support our program. Then there's the program itself. So building a fire is part of our program. Enhancing that fire and building it in ways that is not part of our program, does frequently get people hurt, for instance, using chemical fuels to start a fire. We know that from industry data. So we don't have an approved

fire-starting activity per se. What we do have is guidelines that we assign to certain things that we look at. One of the examples I might use is, the *Guide to Safe Scouting* has an excerpt on slack-lining. There is no program requirements for slack-lining in the Boy Scouting of America. But we've looked at slack-lining as it's a popular activity for youth, and we offer some pretty simple guidance on limitations of what that slack-lining activity would look like if Boy Scouts wanted to do it.

BRYAN: So slack-lining's in the guide. If there's something that's not in the *Guide to Safe Scouting*, it's not in the BSA program, some troops are going to do it anyway. So are there general safety guidelines that they should be following?

RICHARD: I always point people to the preface to the *Guide to Safe Scouting*. And I'm going to summarize it. I'm not reading from it. But it basically says in situations not covered in the guide, use common sense. Follow the Boy Scout Oath and Law. We have a set of guidelines called *The Sweet Sixteen of BSA Safety*. They've been around since about 1999. There's 16 steps. It starts with qualified supervision. It has things like weather checking and planning, first aid resources for your event, and it ends in discipline in following whatever guidelines are set up. That's really the go-to checklist for somebody where we don't have specific guidance.

PAULA: Okay. So other than *The Sweet Sixteen* and common sense, what resources are available to learn more about Scout safety?

RICHARD: I really like pointing people to our [Scouting Safely website](#). We've had that up since October of 2007. During the summer months, for instance, it's got our annual health and medical record there. We have materials on there on how to do risk analysis. We have guidance for things like

communicable disease. You can find information about immunizations if you want to delve into that. So we have a wealth of information on there, plus alerts that go up on a regular basis.

BRYAN: Now, something I've always wondered about the *Guide to Safe Scouting* is: Is it intended to be read cover to cover, or is it more of a reference that you just go to... I'm going climbing so I'm going to go right to the climbing section...?

RICHARD: It's an awesome thing. (Everyone laughs). Everybody should have one in their pocket.

BRYAN: Of course.

RICHARD: Our risk management staff actually reduced the size of it a couple of years ago so it would fit in, like, a pants pocket. We want leaders to take that along as a reference. Again, it's not the full program documentation. It's just little pieces and tidbits. Your example of going to a climbing event or going to COPE and Climbing, we've just recently with the help of the COPE and Climbing Task Force revised some material in there that really is not how to climb, but it's a summary of all the do's and don't's in climbing and Scouting. So yeah, we'd like to have that leader and those youth who are leading their units to have a copy and just take a look at it before they go.

BRYAN: Sure.

PAULA: Is there anything about Scout safety that we haven't talked about that you think our listeners would like to know?

RICHARD: I'd say a couple of things. One is to have a plan and to actually run our

program. It's amazing to me how things happen that really aren't part of our program, but yet people are calling them Scouting. And we see those come in all the time. So, that's probably number one - have a good plan for running our program.

The second part of that, especially in today's world, is the health side of health and safety, and that is if you're sick, stay home. I mean, it's a really simple concept, but, summer camps even weekend activities, where you don't really want people to catch what you've got. So if you're sick, "stay home" is a really good piece of advice.

BRYAN: Now, Richard, I'm not sure if you saw on my blog... I did a post on water guns. But I have to ask you, because lost in all of that was the fact that there really is a safety lesson here, right? So now that you're here with us, can you explain, once and for all, why the water guns should just be for target practice, not for spraying in other people's eyes?

RICHARD: Bryan, I think that's one of your most-read blogs, and you'll recall that the reason that that question came in had to do with using water guns to spray kids in the heat of summer in a very high-humidity area of our nation. The excuses people use to do that, don't actually pan out in a lot of cases. And so, what we see is a series of eye injuries from things where projectiles - water is a projectile - strike kids in the eye or the face. We see heat injuries and heat exhaustion from people running around in the hot thinking they're keeping cool by spraying each other with water guns. So, philosophically, we just don't have a program that shoots at each other.

PAULA: Well, like I said at the beginning of the show, safety is extremely important to the Boy Scouts of America. So Richard, thanks for all you do to keep us safe, and thank you for coming on ScoutCast so that we can learn

about how to do that for ourselves.

RICHARD: It's been great to be here, Paula. Bryan, thanks.

BRYAN: Now, let's head next door to CubCast; then, we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(Cubcast – Duty to God)

BRYAN: Okay. Let's jump into Reminders and Tips for November. First, let's talk membership inventory. By now, all your new youth and adult applications from your recruiting drive should be submitted to the council service center.

PAULA: It's a good idea to compare the My.Scouting Tools records to your own to make sure there are no discrepancies and that all those new folks are properly registered.

BRYAN: Be sure to check out this month's *Boys' Life* magazine for Scout-O-Rama, a big event held in Texas in which Scouts of all ages get to do some rock climbing, canoeing, Dutch oven cooking, tomahawk throwing, and a whole lot more really cool activities.

PAULA: And it's the 100th anniversary of the Order of the Arrow, so they celebrated big at the National Order of the Arrow Conference that was held in August. Check out the November/December issue of *Scouting* magazine for a full recap of the festivities.

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PAULA: That sadly brings us to the end of the November ScoutCast. Thanks to our guest, Richard Bourlon, for joining us.

BRYAN: And thanks to you for listening. Be sure to come back next month for what proves to be an eye-opening discussion on what to do when your planned activity falls apart.

PAULA: So did you enjoy this ScoutCast? Even if you didn't, let us know. Just send us an e-mail to ScoutCast@scouting.org or a Tweet to [@BSAScoutCast](https://twitter.com/BSAScoutCast). Until next month, I'm Paula Murphy.

BRYAN: And I'm Bryan Wendell. Be safe out there.

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