

# How to Stay Dry, Warm & Alive

## Troop 518 Training

During the winter camping season it is important that each Scout fully understands the requirement to stay dry and warm. Your life will depend upon it. The key to staying warm is to stay dry at all times. Just a little water greatly increases the flow of heat from the body. Even in moderate temperatures of 65°F, so much heat can leave a damp body that it may become unable to heat itself and normal body functions will stop. This problem is called hypothermia. The chance of hypothermia greatly increases if the weather includes any of these conditions: dampness, cool temperatures or wind. See the separate Troop 518 training sheet on hypothermia for more information.

### **AWARENESS & PREPARATION**

Every effort to stay alive during cool weather campout starts with staying dry. The life-threatening dampness has four sources, and each source needs to be controlled with special equipment, special preparation and special precautions.

The four sources of moisture are:

- Rain from the sky and dew from overhead trees
- Moisture from or on the ground
- Sweat in clothes that you have been wearing
- Condensation from your breath

### **Water From the Above**

A full rain suit and waterproof boots are required equipment for any campout, but especially if the weather is cool or cold. The body can only be kept dry during the day if it's fully covered. For nighttime protection, it's important to waterproof your tent **BEFORE** going on the campout. Make sure your tent fly is packed and that you know how to properly install it. When you pitch your tent, make sure there's no dead limbs overhead that might fall during the night and poke a hole in your roof. Extra garbage bags make a handy way to weatherproof your boots when you leave them outside your tent at night. Remember that heavy dew can be more drenching than a light rain, and always comes at the coldest part of the night!

### **Water From the Ground**

Falling rain, if allowed to puddle, can quickly flood even a great tent. Follow these hints when setting up your tent:

- Pick a well-drained area in case of rain. Look for areas that water runs away from, not into.
- Try to avoid pitching a tent in valleys (ground is too damp), and hill tops (too windy).
- Pick a flat or slightly sloping grassy area. Grass and leaves add insulation and stop mud.
- Clean the area of rocks, pine cones, sticks, etc. which might poke a hole in the bottom.
- Place a thick sheet of plastic under the tent to stop groundwater from entering the tent.
- Tuck the excess plastic sheet up under the edges of the tent to keep it from catching rain.
- Make sure all rainwater will run away from the tent, not up under the tent.
- Install the rain fly so that it is stretched tight and does not touch the tent.

### **Water From Sweat**

Water in clothes from body sweat is the number 1 cause of not being able to get warm at night. The world's best sleeping bag will not make up for damp clothes. Before you go to sleep change ALL of your clothes, especially underwear, socks and T-shirt. Remember the slightest moisture in your clothes will make you thoroughly uncomfortable all night long. The clothes you put on should be clean, dry clothes. Never assume that clothes have dried out just because you haven't worn them recently.

To insure that clothes stay clean and dry until you're ready to use them, pack one set of underwear, socks and T-shirt per zip-lock bag. You'll be able to find clean dry clothes, even in the dark if you take the time to pack correctly.

### **Water From Your Breath**

The average camper exhales up to 2 quarts of water while sleeping! This water will condense on the inside of your tent if given a chance. In order to keep your sleeping bag and clothes as dry as possible, always keep a vent on your tent. Especially if it's a cold night. And never, ever sleep with your head down inside the sleeping bag.

### **FINAL TIPS**

- Again, always change into clean, dry clothes before going to sleep.
- Never bring rain suits or boots into the tent. Store all wet items outside in a garbage bag.
- Always use a thick foam mattress pad to insulate your sleeping bag from the cold ground.
- You will stay warmer if you wear a sweat suit or use a sleeping bag liner inside the sleeping bag. On cold nights one sleeping bag inside another works great. Blankets on top also help.
- If you don't have a "mummy bag", use a dry stocking cap to conserve body heat. 70% of your body heat is lost from the head.
- Roll up your sleeping bag before leaving the tent. Store your sleeping bag in a garbage bag.

Again, the key to staying warm is to stay dry. Every Scout is required to read pages 40 - 47 in the *BSA Scout Handbook* before going on any winter campout with Troop 518.