



GSLC – SAFETY MOMENT

Aquatics

Many units are taking advantage of the summer weather to participate in aquatics activities. Swimming in the backyard pool, at the nearby lake or at a municipal swimming pool are all fun summer activities. Some units may also be taking boating trips on lakes and rivers this summer.

When you take Scouts near any body of water, such as pool, lake, river or ocean and they have a natural desire to get in the water – even if no swimming activity was planned. Helping youth to learn to swim is incredibly important in keeping them safe in and around the water. And once a Scout has learned to swim, they naturally want to progress into aquatics activities such as sailing, rowing, canoeing, rafting and more. There are plenty of graduated age appropriate aquatics activities. [Age Appropriate Guideline link.](#)

But before that swim or row, we want everyone to have a plan and be on the same page when it comes to aquatics safety in the BSA program. The two key training pre-requisites are **Safe Swim Defense** and **Safety Afloat**. These are not learn-to-swim or paddle courses, they are the “Boy Scout Way” to conduct a safe and fun program.

Learn to Swim

“When a boy has become a First Class Scout – but not before then – he has got a founding in the qualities, mental, moral and physical, that go to make a good useful man. And I look on **swimming** as a very important step, combining as it does attributes of all three of those classes – mentally it gives the boy a new sense of self-confidence and pluck; morally, it gives him the power of helping others in distress and puts a responsibility upon him of actually risking his life at any moment for others; and physically, it is a grand exercise for developing wind and limb.” – Robert Baden-Powell, February 1914



Purposes of Aquatics in Scouting Programs

- To help youth be skillful and at home in the water, relaxed and confident in their ability to swim well.
- To instruct youth in self-preservation, methods of aiding others when necessary, and properly using and caring for aquatic equipment.
- To give youth fun in and on the water and promote activities that will have recreational value in later life.
- To develop coordinated and strong bodies.
- To help units carry on a year-round aquatic program that is safe.
- To prepare unit leaders to carry out a program of instruction in swimming, boating, and rescue methods on a year-round basis.

Aquatics Supervision

All swimming and boating activities must be supervised by a mature and conscientious adult 21 or older who:

- Understands and knowingly accepts responsibility for the well-being and safety of youth members in his or her care;
- Is experienced in the particular activity;
- Is confident in his or her ability to respond appropriately in an emergency; and
- Is trained and committed to the nine points of Safety Afloat and the eight points of Safe Swim Defense depending on the activity.

Aquatics Training Opportunities

- On-line training is available for both Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat.
www.my.scouting.org
- Take an aquatics training course this summer at camp!

Resources

- <http://www.scouting.org/Home/OutdoorProgram/Aquatics.aspx>
- <http://www.scouting.org/Home/OutdoorProgram/Aquatics/safety-afloat.aspx>
- <http://www.scouting.org/Home/OutdoorProgram/Aquatics/safe-swim.aspx>