

# Introduction to *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018-2019*

## Girl Scout Mission

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

## General Statement about *Safety Activity Checkpoints*

*Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC)* is a resource that provides safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA)—approved activities.

GSUSA, local councils, and other units holding a credential—including USA Girl Scouts Overseas (USAGSO) committees—shall be responsible for seeing that all activities are planned and carried out in a manner that considers the health, safety, and general well-being of all participants in accordance with these guidelines.

## Our Goals with Regard to Outdoor Activities in Girl Scouting

- Deliver on the Girl Scout mission
- Serve girls by offering girl-led activities and challenging opportunities that teach outdoor skills safely
- Provide opportunities for active, experiential learning
- Help councils and troops maximize the delivery of the Girl Scout mission by providing a nationally consistent policy that aims to safeguard the well-being of girls and the Girl Scout organization

## Overview of *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*

*Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018* has been developed through collaboration between GSUSA and Girl Scout councils in the form of a task group. The SAC task group is responsible for researching outdoor program aspects pertaining to girls' health, safety, and well-being, as well as each approved activity, including transportation to and from the activities.

Activity specifications, safety gear, age, and experience requirements were developed by researching available safety information for each individual activity. Guidelines—including the presence of certified instructors and lifeguards, adult-to-child ratios, travel specifications, activity progression, and activity-specific safety precautions—have been established after taking into consideration factors such as activity-specific loss data, Girl Scouts' historical experience, American Camp Association recommendations, and the industry trends and standards that are considered best practices for safety.

*Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018* provides a chart for the activities, called "Activities at a Glance," as an easy reference grid with respect to grade-level specifications for activity participation, council approval requirements, and instructor credentialing (i.e., required certification/experience).

Throughout the resource, several individual activities, such as paddling and rowing, climbing and adventure, and target sports, are categorized under related sections to show progression. A

“Miscellaneous Activity” chart is provided for quick and easy reference to popular activities that do require important safety information, but for which a detailed activity checkpoint has not been necessary or fully developed. For these popular activities, safety determinations may be made by the hosting facility. The sections on these activities include safety tips and important links to information that can help you learn more.

## **Girl Scout Safety Standards and Activity Guidelines**

This section provides general safety standards and guidelines, by topics that apply to all activities. Please read and get familiar with these standards and guidelines.

Take these safety guidelines into account for all group outings. Also, incorporate the standards with the specific activity checkpoint provided for individual approved activities.

**Council Approval Requirement.** At the top of each activity page you will see a field indicating whether your council’s approval is required to perform the activity. There are three categories for this field:

- **Required.** Certain higher-risk activities will require an extra measure of risk management input. This could be related to travel; ensuring a local facility is safe and adequately insured; checking a council’s own liability insurance to make sure coverage is adequate; or determining if girls of a certain grade level have the skills to safely engage in an activity. Examples include swimming, skiing, and all travel involving an overnight stay. For these activities, the activity heading will read: “Council Approval: Required.”
- **May be required.** Some activities fall into a category that indicates it’s up to your council to determine whether it needs or wants to be advised ahead of time. Activities that are accepted and typical in one state may not be common in another state. In addition, facilities and organizations offering activities can vary greatly from state to state. These activities may require adherence to local policy, practice, or statute and consistency with your council’s Girl Scout culture to ensure a specific activity is endorsed. In addition, the extremity or intensity of the sport or activity can vary greatly— bicycling, backpacking, and amusement park rides are examples of this. Your council may simply wish to know the grade level of participants for certain activities. Your council is free to update this field accordingly. For these activities, the activity heading will read: “Council Approval: May be required.”
- **Not required.** Activities that have traditionally and historically been accepted and successfully performed in all states across the nation and carry a known or predictable risk but are not considered dangerous will carry no insurance implications or exclusions. Examples of this range from geocaching to STEM projects to crafting and the arts. For these activities, the activity heading will read: “Council Approval: Not required.”

**Activity Preparation.** Communicate with your Girl Scout council and girls’ parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls’ general health examinations. Make arrangements in advance for all transportation and confirm plans before departure. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.

**Adult Supervision.** The adult-to-girl ratio is two non-related adults, including one woman, for every:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Ambassadors

Some high-adventure activities may require more adult-to-girl supervision than stated above. For those activities, the safety activity checkpoints for that activity will provide specific adult-to-girl supervision ratios. Remember, some activities are less safe for younger girls, particularly Daisies and Brownies. Younger girls may not be permitted to participate based on their age—as appropriate, this is called out in the individual activity write-ups. Adult-to-girl ratios do not apply to girls who are not permitted to participate. In cases where younger-girl participation is an option but only under certain conditions, this is indicated toward the top (on some occasions, with an asterisk that's followed by explanation further into the write-up).

**Note:** For mixed-grade level troops, use the ratio for the lowest grade level in the troop. For example, if the troop consists of Daisies and Brownies, the Daisy ratio should be followed.

**Itinerary and Key Contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information can easily be saved to mobile phones.

**Safety Gear.** Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary and are required by the industry and/or the American Camp Association while performing the activity. The necessary safety gear is clearly listed under each approved activity. For example, helmets are necessary for bicycling, skiing, and other activities. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it's not listed here. Take roller rinks for example—some offer roller derby or roller dancing, and so they may offer helmets. Other rinks, such as those featuring traditional skating, may not. If a rink offers helmets, accept them for the girls. The same applies to organized sledding or tobogganing. Some runs are faster than others and trail types vary. Therefore, if an organized company is running it and they offer helmets, use them.

**Required Gear.** Required gear simply means the gear that girls need to actually participate in the activity. For example, ski poles and ski boots are necessary to ski.

**Additional Gear.** Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These items can be used in any activity, including daylong hikes and camping and other overnight trips, and often make the experience more comfortable.

Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:

- Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time
- Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

**Instructor Credibility.** Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training and certification, or documented experience required to meet your council's guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity.

With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard instructor is 18, qualified instructors of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.

**General Insurance.** Commercial general liability insurance protects the Girl Scout organization. The facility or vendor that hosts your troop event (for example, a riding stable, a hotel, or a bus company) should carry general liability insurance, and auto liability when motor vehicles are involved. A facility that carries valid general liability insurance has almost always been examined for risk by its insurance carrier. If a place does not carry general liability insurance, it's a red flag. It may not be safe, so it would be best to select another place.

When your council requires you to provide documented evidence of insurance, ask the facility for a certificate of insurance for your records. But be aware that some places do not provide documented evidence of insurance to all customers, or only provide a certificate of insurance when a group is large or if the group plans to pay a certain amount.

If you plan to enter into a written contract with a facility or are considering a new vendor, remember to consult your council for the proper insurance requirements. Check to be sure the certificate of insurance you will be obtaining validates the insurance limits outlined in your contract or agreement.

**Activity Accident Insurance.** Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two or fewer overnights.

Trips that are three overnights or more are not covered under automatic activity accident insurance. Also, international trips and any activity with non-members are not automatically covered. Activity accident insurance must be individually purchased for coverage under these scenarios.

You will need to purchase extra activity accident insurance for outings and events that:

- Involve three or more overnights
- Take place outside U.S. territory
- Include non-members, such as siblings and friends

When planning trips, always consult your council to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed.

**Respecting the Environment.** Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#) (scroll down to the “How to Leave No Trace Outdoors” video)—and, in fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will teach girls responsibility and also safeguard your troop and local council from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

**Emergency Preparation.** Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away emergency medical and law enforcement services are located. Understand your surroundings in relation to the closest medical facility or hospital. Also, familiarize yourself with the forms of emergency communication and emergency transportation options that are available.

**First Aid.** Be prepared. Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and an adult with current certification in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, and one who is prepared to handle cases of abrasions, sprains, and fractures. When camping or hiking, if any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

**Weather Conditions.** Always monitor the weather in the days preceding an activity or trip. Check the local weather report on the day of the trip. For circumstances in which forecasted weather could be a risk to safety, consider scheduling alternatives. In the case of severe wind, lightning, hail, ice, snow storm, flood warnings due to heavy rain, or a hurricane or tropical storm, consider contingency plans for itineraries and transportation. Consider rescheduling the event if the weather report is severe. Adhere to public safety announcements concerning staying indoors or evacuating the area. In extremely hot weather, girls should go on rides and do other outdoor activities in the morning and late afternoon hours, and during the hottest time of day stay in a shaded area or inside with air conditioning. It is important on extremely hot days to plan for easy access to plenty of drinking water to prevent heat exhaustion or dehydration.

If extreme weather or temperature conditions prevent a trip, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity.

**Buddy System.** Use the buddy system, which means pairing girls up as partners. Each girl is responsible for staying with her buddy throughout a trip or activity. A buddy can warn her partner of danger, give a helping hand, or get immediate assistance when the situation warrants it. All girls are encouraged to stay near the group so that if someone is injured or not feeling well, there are others, including an adult, close by to seek help.

**Mosquitoes, Ticks, and Lyme Disease Prevention.** Mosquitoes, ticks, and insect bites are an inherent risk to any warm weather outdoor activity. Ensure parents and guardians are aware of the need to have their girls properly covered, preferably with closed shoes and light-colored clothing and socks. It is important to advise parents and guardians of this risk and the safety precautions they should take. The understanding that your troop or council cannot be held responsible for tick bites can be reinforced with a waiver reference on a permission slip

An excellent resource for learning more is the [tick and Lyme disease prevention section of UpToDate](#). This site is used by medical professionals and patients worldwide to find answers to medical questions.

To learn more about using insect repellent safely, visit the Environmental Protection Agency website at [EPA Using Repellents Safely](#). To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out [EPA DEET](#). And for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review [EPA Insect Repellents](#).

**Health History.** Girl Scout councils require an annual health history form to be completed and signed by one parent/guardian for every Girl Scout and filed with the troop leader.

Follow council guidelines to comply with this. The form should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergy and be updated each year. The form can also reflect any over-the-counter medication that a girl is not permitted to take, if there are any.

If parents send medication on trips or activities, it should be in an original labeled container and administered by one designated adult. Health history forms can be shared with the site or camp physician or nurse ahead of time.

Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl with you when traveling. You may require an updated mid-year health history for overnight trips. For physically demanding activities, such as water sports, horseback riding, or skiing, an additional current health history form may be obtained to make sure all adults are aware of any current medical conditions or special needs. Councils will retain all health history forms in accordance with state record retention requirements and laws.

**Health Exams.** Some councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which may include resident camp. Again, follow your council guidelines with respect to health exams. In most cases, the health exam needs to have been completed within one year of the last date of the trip for a girl to participate. Your council may require a current health exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips of three nights or more, so ask your local council about their policy. A health exam can be given by a licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a registered nurse. The health exam form must be signed by the medical provider.

For large events or trips longer in duration, such as resident camp or a weeklong trip to a ranch, the designated health professional at the trip location is responsible for collecting all health exam forms and health history forms for girls and adults.

Health exam forms and health history forms are to be shared only with designated health professionals and your local council staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information is private (by law) and must not be shared or publicly available, so keep it safe and secure. Only share information on a need-to-know basis.

Councils will retain all health exam forms in accordance with individual state record retention requirements and laws.

**Vaccination and Immunization.** Issues or questions with respect to vaccination exemption periodically arise with activity and trip participation. Vaccine exemption laws vary by state and focus on public and private school attendance more directly than they do for youth organizations, sport clubs, and activities. Therefore, it is best to obtain local state legal guidance and proceed in accordance with the state law as it applies to school attendance if vaccination exemption or girl immunization becomes an issue. A general overview of state laws regarding school immunization exemption is provided and annually updated on the [National Conference of State Legislatures website](#).

If you have any questions about your obligation to communicate immunization issues with parents, contact your local Girl Scout council, which may wish to seek legal guidance. Absent state laws that speak directly to vaccine immunization for participation in volunteer youth organizations, the legal guidance with respect to parent communication or advisement should be in accordance with local/state law as it pertains to school attendance.

**Including Girls with Disabilities.** Girl Scouts is committed to making reasonable accommodations for any physical or cognitive limitations a girl may have. Communicate with girls of all abilities and/or their caregivers to assess special needs and accommodations. To learn more about the resources available, visit [Disabled World](#), which provides general information about people with disabilities. On the site you can also find information and resources available for certain sports and activities—so always check when planning to include a girl with a disability that may impact her participation in a specific activity.

**Permission Slips.** It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a girl's parent or guardian for any trip or special activity. This applies to all girls under the age of 18. In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be certain extenuating circumstances regarding a custody situation where dual consent may be best to safeguard troop or council liability. These situations are typically the exception, but it is important to remain both aware of and sensitive to potential scenarios. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please alert your council so they can consult local or state laws for specific legal guidance. For international trips, always get both parents'/guardians' written consent.

**Transportation.** Keep in mind that 15-passenger model vans have historically been flagged as a safety concern by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and are therefore not recommended. There are state specific laws which may regulate the use of 15 passenger vans for public transport. These vehicles may or may not be permitted to transport children in your state; or specific driver age and commercial driver license requirements may apply to operate 15 passenger vans. Prior council level approval is required to determine if the vehicle is statutorily permitted and meets safety criteria. Always consult your council for prior approval before opting to use these vehicles.

For chartered buses or rented vehicles, always ensure the possession of safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, and the use of seatbelts. Make certain proper insurance is in place

by requesting a certificate of insurance with a minimum of \$1 million in auto liability coverage. Uber, Lyft, Curb, and similar ridesharing companies are not permitted to transport girls because the safety, credibility, and insurance of the drivers is far more difficult to qualify than that of traditional or well-known charter and rental companies. Complete auto insurance coverage is often not available or not sufficient for the majority of rideshare drivers.

**Overnight Trips.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning so they know what to expect. Avoid having men sleep in the same space as girls and women. During family or parent-daughter overnights, one family unit may sleep in the same sleeping quarters in designated program areas. When parents are staffing an event, daughters should remain in sleeping quarters with other girls rather than in staff areas.

The use of Airbnb and other private rentals is not permitted. The safety, credibility, and insurance requirements of private rentals are difficult to qualify compared to traditional commercial properties. With traditional commercial properties like hotels, safety standards are continually monitored. With a private rental there is no way to adequately guarantee that locks are on the doors, that a group of male or female adults are not also present in close quarters, that there are no animals in the building, that the property itself is safe and secure, that the owner is credible, and that there are adequate fire exits. Proper liability coverage or homeowners insurance is often unavailable or not applicable to private rentals in the scenario where guests are paying money for use of the property. In other words, there is no effective insurance on personal private property being rented for commercial public use. This means the property has not been investigated, appraised, or approved for safe public use, including by children. For these reasons, the guideline is to stay away from private rentals such as Airbnb, VRBO, Flipkey, Roomarama, Homeaway, VayStays, Tripping, Wimdu, and Couchsurfing.

**Emotional Safety.** Adults are responsible for making Girl Scouts a place where girls are as safe emotionally as they are physically. Protect the emotional safety of girls by creating a team-spirited environment and coaching girls to honor this agreement. Team-spirit agreements typically encourage behaviors like respecting diverse feelings and opinions, resolving conflicts constructively, avoiding physical and verbal bullying, avoiding clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive and helpful communication with others.

**Equal Treatment.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic status. When scheduling, planning, and carrying out activities, carefully consider the needs of all girls involved, including school schedules, family needs, financial constraints, religious holidays, and the accessibility of appropriate transportation and meeting places.

**Modeling the Right Behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Don't consume alcohol, smoke, or use foul language in the presence of girls. Do not carry ammunition or firearms in the presence of girls, unless given special permission by your council for target sport activities. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

**Reporting Abuse.** Improper touching, sexual advances, sexual communications, or sexual pressure of any kind is strictly prohibited in Girl Scouting. Any form of abuse—whether it be in a sexual context involving minors or in the form of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse—is not acceptable. Volunteers are responsible for following their council's guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around abuse or neglect with respect to girls.

**Online Safety.** Instruct girls never to put their full names or contact information online, engage in virtual conversation with strangers, or arrange in-person meetings with online contacts. On



group websites, publish girls' first names only and never divulge their contact information. Teach girls the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge and ask them to commit to it.

**Money-Earning Activities.** Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including Girl Scout Cookie sales and other council-sponsored product sales. During Girl Scout product sales, you are responsible for the safety of girls, money, and products. In addition, a wide variety of organizations, causes, and fundraisers may appeal to Girl Scouts to serve as their labor force. When representing Girl Scouts, girls cannot participate in money-earning activities that represent partisan politics or are not Girl Scout-approved product sales and efforts. It is imperative that Girl Scouts do not partake in anything that can be construed as unrelated business income, in order to protect our organization's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If there is a questionable circumstance, consult your council.

## Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted

In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it's only natural that girls will sometimes want to take part in activities that are not specifically addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints*. In many cases, as new activity options arise, there may not have been an opportunity or a need to fully provide a safety checkpoint. In addition, some activities may be unique to a specific area of the country. If there is a question or a need for specific guidelines on an unlisted activity, please bring it to the attention of your council for specific direction.

After being thoroughly investigated, some activities are clearly classified as "not permitted." Each sport or activity on the "not permitted" list is evaluated annually on safety factors, council feedback, insurability, and accident history. These activities pose a high risk of severe bodily injury, require extensive prior experience, or require a license to participate. Activities with a poor accident history based on loss data gathered from various industries are not approved and, thus, are deemed "not permitted." The purpose of prohibiting certain activities is first and foremost to protect girls. The prohibitions also safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of your local council and the Girl Scout organization.

GSUSA cannot approve, endorse, or provide safety checkpoints for these "not permitted" activities.

The following activities are in the **not permitted** category:

- Bungee jumping
- Flying in privately owned planes, helicopters, or blimps
- Hang gliding
- Untethered hot-air ballooning
- Hunting
- Jet skiing or using WaveRunners
- Riding a motorbike
- Using outdoor trampolines
- Parachuting/skydiving
- Parasailing
- Paintball tagging
- Riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs)

- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

**Bungee Jumping.** Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

**High Risk Activities.** Hang gliding, parasailing, zorbing, parachuting/skydiving, and untethered hot-air ballooning are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective deem them to be high risk.

**Privately Owned Aircraft.** Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils' commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

The severity factor of private-plane risk to girl safety is very high. Although there may not be many plane accidents, there are rarely minor plane accidents. The risk involved concerns multiple fatalities. Also, the risk assessment process involved for a private aircraft itself and the credentialing of private pilots (including the owner's private aviation insurance for passengers, which may exclude anything that resembles commercial use) is too much responsibility to place on volunteers chaperoning girls. Private flying is very uncommon in most states, so the risk assessment process is foreign to most councils and volunteers. There is not enough knowledge of aircraft risk for most councils and GSUSA to be confident about its safety, in addition to the adverse insurance implications.

**Outdoor Trampolines.** The outdoor trampoline poses a high risk of injury for children. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommend for children under six years old.

**Paintball Tag.** Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

**Hunting.** Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during

hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity. A very large majority of councils do not commonly hunt or request hunting trips.

**Jet Skiing, Motor Biking, ATVs.** Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding ATVs are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

## Understanding Higher-Risk Activities—Council Approval Required

**Flying in Private Aircraft.** Note that flying in private aircraft is a clear and definitive exclusion under most commercial general liability insurance policies and is definitively listed as a “not permitted” activity.

Small chartered aircraft trips are not prohibited because the safety factors involving equipment and pilots are easier to qualify. Also, you will need to check your council's commercial general liability insurance policy because chartered aviation activity may be covered. Your council may carry a non-owned aviation liability insurance policy, which should also be confirmed. (Again, these policies almost always exclude private aircraft.) An accident involving an aircraft mishap involves the highest possible risk, which is multiple fatalities. Your council itself could be financially liable for any potential loss or lawsuit, should the worst occur. Your council will want to make sure the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing a minimum of \$1 million liability insurance with a \$5 million umbrella. It is imperative to get council-level approval and it is strongly recommended that your council consult with GSUSA Risk & Insurance via [LShimborski@girlscouts.org](mailto:LShimborski@girlscouts.org) for help determining the safety, risk, and insurance aspects of any small professionally chartered aviation activity.

**Target Sports.** Marksmanship activities require council permission, and volunteers need to transport weapons separately from girls. The minimum age for girls using firearms in highly supervised activities is 12 years of age. Younger girls may participate in certain target sports not involving the use of firearms, such as those using air guns or BB guns, where they can learn gun safety.

**Indoor Skydiving.** If your council expressly approves indoor skydiving because it is contained, low-impact, and adjustable to the size and skill-level of participants, then it is not prohibited. Indoor skydiving is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies or Brownies.

**Tethered Hot-Air Ballooning.** Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot-air balloon. Consult your council so they can check their general liability insurance to determine if this activity is covered. The council should also examine its non-owned aircraft liability policy, if they have one. A hot-air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore the same standard applies—chartered (tethered only) hot-air ballooning can be considered, but private hot air balloons cannot.

**Tomahawk/Ax Throwing.** This is an activity that has been removed from the prohibited list for Girl Scout Ambassadors, Seniors, and Cadettes only. It was determined that girls in these grade-level groups can actively and safely learn tomahawk/ax throwing, which hones their ability to perform the skill in the outdoors. However, handling blades, especially heavy bladed tools, can be risky for beginners. The maturity level of girls should always be considered. The skill set, experience level, and credentials of the facilitator should be thoroughly vetted and approved by your council.

Remember to have a specific process in place for handling requests regarding activities not addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity covered in *SAC 2018*.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any expert supervision or special certification.
- If there is still a question, always consult your local council for clarification and approval.

## Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts, in order to preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved

## Regarding Tier 1 and Tier 2 High-Risk Categories

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles has determined two categories of high-risk activities, called Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 high-risk activities can be approved by service unit managers or their designees, using the Parent Permission form. Tier 2 high-risk activities will continue to be approved by using **both** the Parent Permission form and the [Extended Travel/High-Risk Application](#) eform for Travel Go-Team/Council approval. Always check the specific Safety Activity Checkpoint for appropriate grade levels and for any restrictions.

Should service unit managers or designees prefer additional Travel Go-Team/Council approval for Tier 1 high-risk activities, they can direct leaders to submit both the Parent Permission form and the [Extended Travel/High-Risk Application](#) eform for that additional approval.

High-risk activities and their tier category are indicated in the chart below. Refer to the reference document *A Troop Leader's Guide to Permission Forms* for details on how to use permission forms.

- Stunt skiing
- Zorbing

**Bungee Jumping.** Bungee jumping is not highly regulated for safety or consistent in terms of facilitation from one place to the next. It is an activity that carries a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance companies that have access to the accident history of bungee jumping have deemed this activity high risk and dangerous.

**High Risk Activities.** Hang gliding, parasailing, zorbing, parachuting/skydiving, and untethered hot-air ballooning are activities similar to bungee jumping in terms of safety regulations, consistency of facilitation, and insurance implications. These are activities that carry a significant risk of bodily injury. Most insurance carriers with knowledge of these activities from a claims perspective deem them to be high risk.

**Privately Owned Aircraft.** Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and (most) councils' commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, your council would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy (if your council purchases this type of policy, which it may not), a private plane is a separate and distinct insurable interest (compared to a professional chartered aircraft tour). In other words, even under non-owned aviation insurance, privately owned and/or operated planes are often excluded.

The severity factor of private-plane risk to girl safety is very high. Although there may not be many plane accidents, there are rarely minor plane accidents. The risk involved concerns multiple fatalities. Also, the risk assessment process involved for a private aircraft itself and the credentialing of private pilots (including the owner's private aviation insurance for passengers, which may exclude anything that resembles commercial use) is too much responsibility to place on volunteers chaperoning girls. Private flying is very uncommon in most states, so the risk assessment process is foreign to most councils and volunteers. There is not enough knowledge of aircraft risk for most councils and GSUSA to be confident about its safety, in addition to the adverse insurance implications.

**Outdoor Trampolines.** The outdoor trampoline poses a high risk of injury for children. The activity can result in sprains and fractures in the arms or legs—as well as potentially serious head and neck injuries. The risk of injury is so high that the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly discourages the use of trampolines at home. Outdoor trampoline park injuries also are an area of emerging concern. Indoor trampolines in a confined padded indoor facility with higher supervision are far safer, but still not recommend for children under six years old.

**Paintball Tag.** Paintball tag is offered in specialized parks where participants shoot pellets of paint at each other throughout an obstacle course, woods, or maze. The pressure used in a paintball gun is quite strong. When hit by a paintball pellet, a girl is certain to experience some pain, swelling, and perhaps a bruise or welt for a couple of days. Shooting a girl with a paintball pellet is likely to cause a minor injury and has the potential to cause a more serious injury to eyes, mouth, ears, and throat. For these reasons, paintball tag is prohibited. Target paintball shooting, however, is permitted.

**Hunting.** Hunting is a sport that requires handling firearms in the wilderness, high maturity levels, and the availability of expert guides. Shooting accidents are not uncommon during

hunting trips. This is also a sport which rarely, if ever, comes up as a requested activity. A very large majority of councils do not commonly hunt or request hunting trips.

**Jet Skiing, Motor Biking, ATVs.** Jet skiing, motor biking, and riding ATVs are prohibited due to the extremely high incidence of serious injury involved. Most insurance carriers are not comfortable with these activities due to poor accident history. Insurance companies require that an operator hold a valid driver's license. Adults and children riding on the back of motor bikes and jet skis as passengers are exposed to a high risk of serious injury with no active opportunity to actually learn the skill.

## Understanding Higher-Risk Activities—Council Approval Required

**Flying in Private Aircraft.** Note that flying in private aircraft is a clear and definitive exclusion under most commercial general liability insurance policies and is definitively listed as a “not permitted” activity.

Small chartered aircraft trips are not prohibited because the safety factors involving equipment and pilots are easier to qualify. Also, you will need to check your council's commercial general liability insurance policy because chartered aviation activity may be covered. Your council may carry a non-owned aviation liability insurance policy, which should also be confirmed. (Again, these policies almost always exclude private aircraft.) An accident involving an aircraft mishap involves the highest possible risk, which is multiple fatalities. Your council itself could be financially liable for any potential loss or lawsuit, should the worst occur. Your council will want to make sure the aviation company has evidenced proper insurance showing a minimum of \$1 million liability insurance with a \$5 million umbrella. It is imperative to get council-level approval and it is strongly recommended that your council consult with GSUSA Risk & Insurance via [LShimborski@girlscouts.org](mailto:LShimborski@girlscouts.org) for help determining the safety, risk, and insurance aspects of any small professionally chartered aviation activity.

**Target Sports.** Marksmanship activities require council permission, and volunteers need to transport weapons separately from girls. The minimum age for girls using firearms in highly supervised activities is 12 years of age. Younger girls may participate in certain target sports not involving the use of firearms, such as those using air guns or BB guns, where they can learn gun safety.

**Indoor Skydiving.** If your council expressly approves indoor skydiving because it is contained, low-impact, and adjustable to the size and skill-level of participants, then it is not prohibited. Indoor skydiving is not recommended for Girl Scout Daisies or Brownies.

**Tethered Hot-Air Ballooning.** Some outdoor parks may offer the opportunity to learn the skill of hot-air ballooning in a relatively safe and controlled environment utilizing a tethered hot-air balloon. Consult your council so they can check their general liability insurance to determine if this activity is covered. The council should also examine its non-owned aircraft liability policy, if they have one. A hot-air balloon is an aircraft and viewed the same as small planes or helicopters from an aviation risk perspective. Therefore the same standard applies—chartered (tethered only) hot-air ballooning can be considered, but private hot air balloons cannot.

**Tomahawk/Ax Throwing.** This is an activity that has been removed from the prohibited list for Girl Scout Ambassadors, Seniors, and Cadettes only. It was determined that girls in these grade-level groups can actively and safely learn tomahawk/ax throwing, which hones their ability to perform the skill in the outdoors. However, handling blades, especially heavy bladed tools, can be risky for beginners. The maturity level of girls should always be considered. The skill set, experience level, and credentials of the facilitator should be thoroughly vetted and approved by your council.

Remember to have a specific process in place for handling requests regarding activities not addressed in *Safety Activity Checkpoints 2018*.

- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity covered in *SAC 2018*.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any expert supervision or special certification.
- If there is still a question, always consult your local council for clarification and approval.

## Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take

For legal reasons, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts, in order to preserve the integrity of our organization. These include:

- Endorsement of commercial products or services
- Solicitation of financial contributions for purposes other than Girl Scouting
- Participation in political campaigns or legislative activities, unless the legislative activity has been council-approved

## Regarding Tier 1 and Tier 2 High-Risk Categories

Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles has determined two categories of high-risk activities, called Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 high-risk activities can be approved by service unit managers or their designees, using the Parent Permission form. Tier 2 high-risk activities will continue to be approved by using **both** the Parent Permission form and the [Extended Travel/High-Risk Application](#) eform for Travel Go-Team/Council approval. Always check the specific Safety Activity Checkpoint for appropriate grade levels and for any restrictions.

Should service unit managers or designees prefer additional Travel Go-Team/Council approval for Tier 1 high-risk activities, they can direct leaders to submit both the Parent Permission form and the [Extended Travel/High-Risk Application](#) eform for that additional approval.

High-risk activities and their tier category are indicated in the chart below. Refer to the reference document *A Troop Leader's Guide to Permission Forms* for details on how to use permission forms.