

## ESSENTIAL ITEMS FOR A COLD WEATHER CAMPOUT (one night)

(Thanks to Mr. Jack Alleman)

Camping in the cold weather does not mean you need to be cold. Planning, preparation and the right equipment will make a cold weather campout an enjoyable experience and something to look forward to again in the future. Most of Troop 209's cold weather experience will not involve snow, but preparations for camping in temperatures below 32° are essentially the same. The hints and instructions below have been developed over many years and many cold weather campouts. Obviously, many items are the same as those needed for warmer weather camping – always use common sense.

### Stuff to pack or bring

Backpack or duffel bag (a backpack is recommended when the campsite is more than a few yards from your transportation; a duffel bag is ok if the campsite is close by);

Sleeping bag (rated for warmth at least to the lowest expected temperature on the campout);  
Sleeping bag stuff sack (waterproof, or put the sleeping bag in a sealed waterproof plastic bag);

Extra blanket (wool is much preferred, as it offers the greatest potential warmth – including when it's wet);

Sleeping pad (not an air mattress – which may be more comfortable, but will not keep you warm. The best insulator is dead air space; moving air, inside of an air mattress, is not an insulator and will just make you cold. For cold weather camping closed cell foam pads are best, if you must have more cushioning the self inflating air/foam type pads are a good second choice, if you absolutely must use a conventional air mattress putting newspaper on top of the mattress will help.);

Newspaper (one or two sections are adequate);

Ground cloth (for under the tent floor – to keep the inside of the tent dry);

Tent (duh), pegs and poles (make sure you have all necessary parts – go ahead and groan, but it happens);

Canteen or water bottle (about a quart is good);

Compass (always);

Personal first aid kit (see Scout Handbook) (the Troop has a first aid kit, but it may not always be readily available);

Gloves (cold weather quality) or mittens (wool), or both;

Knit hat (wool or thermal of some sort);

Winter coat (down lined or fleece);

Poncho or rain jacket (good ones are warm, in addition to waterproof);

Wool socks (4 pair minimum per Mr. Alleman, but per Mr. McNiece, you can't have too many pairs of clean, warm socks); a couple of pairs of wicking sock liners (polypropylene, coolmax, capilene, etc.) are an excellent idea – as they help wick moisture away from the skin, and the body *will* sweat no matter how cold it gets;

Long johns (2 pair – one for the first day, and one to wear at night and the next day; polypropylene or other wicking type is best);

Flash light (along with at least one back-up set of batteries);

Matches (waterproof, or regular wood stick matches in a waterproof container), or a multi-purpose lighter (the kind with a handle and long point – *not* a cigarette lighter);

At least one extra set of clothes (in case you get wet somehow, also can function as a pillow; also include a sweatshirt and sweat pants);

Scarf (a good idea);

Waterproof and insulated boots (make sure they are large enough for feet plus 2 pair of socks).

NOTE: All clothes and sleeping gear should be packed in sealed plastic bags, with the air removed. Put the items you will or might need first, such as your tent, ground cloth, poncho and first aid kit at the top of your pack.

### **General winter campout suggestions**

- Clear snow from eating and fire area; otherwise, a sea of mud will result;
- Change clothes whenever you get wet;
- Wear and bring layers of clothing, so you can add or remove as needed;
- Cover outside gear at night with an extra tarp or put it under a dining fly, or both, so that it will not get wet;
- The secret of staying warm in cold weather is to stay dry – and to think of the word: COLD:
  - C – stands for stay clean;
  - O – stands for don't overheat;
  - L – stands for loose layers of clothes;
  - D – stands for dry.

Be prepared and stay mentally alert. Scouts should promptly report cold-related problems to a troop leader or other adult.

### **Steps for warm sleeping on a winter campout**

1. Select a site that has good drainage; a tent on a slight slope is good.
2. Sleeping area should be cleared of snow, if possible. Also clear rocks and sticks.
3. Prepare a bed of leaves a few inches thick.
4. Place the ground cloth on the ground.
5. Set up your tent, peg it to the ground as needed (especially stretch the rain fly away from the main part of the tent so it will form an air barrier); make sure the ground cloth is not sticking out from under the tent – fold it back under the tent if it is larger.
6. Pile leaves or snow around the bottom of the tent for insulation.
7. Keep clothes and sleeping gear in sealed plastic bags until they are needed – otherwise they may absorb moisture from the air. Do not unroll sleeping bags until bed time for the same reason.
8. At bed time:
  - a. put boots or shoes where they won't get the tent floor or other things wet or dirty;
  - b. spread out your sleeping pad;
  - c. spread the newspapers over the sleeping pad (up to 4 layers thick) and stuff extra sheets inside boots to help dry them out;
  - d. unroll and open your sleeping bag, and put the blanket inside – outside is ok too, but it may absorb moisture from the air;
  - e. Completely change clothes, including putting on clean long johns and socks, and clean sweat pants and sweatshirt – and wear a clean knit hat. *Do not wear any clothes you wore during the day.*
  - f. If they are reasonably dry, spread clothes worn during the day under the sleeping bag so they will be warm in the morning.
  - g. Climb inside the sleeping bag and tuck loose parts under you.
  - h. Your jacket or coat may be placed over your sleeping bag to help keep you warm.
  - i. If you are too warm you will begin to sweat – immediately remove some of your clothing or insulation.
9. Do not drink a lot of fluids before going to bed. Eventually, they will end up in your bladder, which your body will need to keep warm. Shivering is an emergency method of the body to generate heat to warm itself, and the more fluids to keep warm in your bladder, the more you are likely to shiver – until you get up in the cold to eliminate the problem.