

# Troop 266 Safe Hiking Procedures

July 22, 2002

As revised by the Troop Committee

Boy Scout Troop 266 follows safe hiking procedures on all hiking and backpacking events sponsored by the troop or by its patrols. The *Boy Scout Handbook*, the *Scoutmaster's Handbook*, and BSA's *Guide to Safe Scouting* provide excellent safety procedures for Scouts and leaders.

The Troop Committee of Troop 266 has determined it is in the best interest of our hikers to place special emphasis on certain safety procedures. While we follow all safety procedures taught by the Boy Scouts of America, we have found that certain procedures warrant special attention. These are listed below.

1. **Stay together.** The underlying principle is that our hiking groups should stay together as a hiking team, and the pace is set so that slower hikers can remain with the rest of the hiking team. Troop 266 hikes as a team; a team does not abandon slower members. And in an emergency, the slower members may have resources that the entire team needs.
2. **Know the leader.** On any hike, one adult will be designated as the adult leader. The adult leader will designate a boy team leader, who is expected to provide positive leadership for the team. The adult leader will support the boy team leader as much as circumstances allow; however, the adult hike team leader will work to assure that the team follows Safe Hiking Procedures.
3. **At the trailhead.** At the trailhead, before the hiking begins, the adult leader and the boy team leader will go through the Safety Checklist, so that all team members can hear.
4. **Buddy System.** On a hike, the entire hiking team is a "buddy group." However, at rest stops, campsites and other activities apart from the actual hiking, the traditional Buddy System applies. Thus, before the group starts on the trail, the boy team leader and the adult leader will also make sure that all Scouts announce a buddy for those portions of the trip. (In the event of an odd number, there may be 3 buddies). The buddies will be identified out loud - to the group as a whole - so that everyone knows who the buddy teams are. Each Scout is responsible throughout the hike for knowing where his buddy is - and for alerting the team of any problem concerning his buddy. No hiker, whether boy or adult, will venture off alone. No hiker, whether boy or adult, will be left alone.
5. **Hiking order.** The hikers will hike single file. In consultation with the other hikers, the boy team leader and the adult leader will establish the order in which the hikers will walk. Once the order of hikers is determined, it does not change except by permission of the boy team leader and the adult leader.
6. **Rotate the lead hiker.** Generally, it is better for the entire team if the "lead hiker" the first person in line - rotates at agreed-to intervals (15 or 20 minutes generally work best). The lead hiker is responsible for knowing where the rest of the team members are; he or she must never be out of communication with the rest of the team. The lead hiker is also accountable to the boy team leader and to the adult leader.

7. **"Is Anybody Not Ready?"** No member of the hiking team will start up the trail until the entire team is ready to move. The lead hiker will start the group moving, but not until conducting a head count and confirming that all hikers are present. Before resuming the hike, the lead hiker will ask this question: "Is Anybody Not Ready?" This allows any hiker to prevent the team from leaving until he or she is able to begin. When everyone is ready, the lead hiker will start the group moving.
8. **15 or 20 minute check-ins.** At regular intervals (15 or 20 minutes generally work best), the lead hiker will stop the group, to make sure that all hikers are accounted for. The boy team leader and the adult leader are responsible for making sure these check-ins occur.
9. **Placement of adults.** The adult leader should walk behind the first three Scouts. From this position, he is able to watch the lead Scout and to remain in contact with the rear of the team. If the lead hiker gets too far ahead, or the group spreads out, the adult leader can ask the lead hiker to allow the team to regroup. It is important for the adult leader to be in contact with the lead hiker at all times. Generally, it works best for the other adults to walk at the end, behind the file of Scouts.
10. **Stop at points of risk, confusion or decision.** The lead hiker will stop and wait for all team members to catch up at points where there is risk of injury, confusion or decision (trail junctions, stream crossings, places where the trail seems to disappear, etc.)
11. **Does a team divide?** Troop 266 hikes as a team. A team does not abandon slower members. If a hiking group is large enough and strong enough, with enough qualified adult supervision, it may be appropriate to create two more-compact and more manageable teams. The boy team leader and all adult leaders on the team must agree to form two teams. A boy team leader, plus qualified adult leadership, must be identified for each of the two smaller teams. A head count will be made of each team, being perfectly clear how many adults and boys - and which adults and boys - will be members of each team. An agreement must be made on precisely where and when the two teams will meet again.
12. **Radios are not a substitute for Team.** Two-way radios, including "family radios" (FRS type) can be very helpful in allowing a group to remain in contact - but must not lead to a false sense of security; a group using them must make sure everyone understands their limitations. Radios should not be used as an excuse to divide the team; rather, they should be used to add further security to the team.