

# Safety Starts With Us

JUNE 2016

## Case 1 — Obstacle Course

Youth were participating in an obstacle course activity during a meeting. One youth was climbing a padded wall when another youth crashed onto the mat from another direction. This caused the mat to tip over. As a result, the climbing wall fell over and the youth who was climbing fell to the floor. He hit his head on a piece of ground that was exposed during the fall. At the time, a small bump and bruise developed because of an apparent head injury. The youth was taken to a doctor and was found to have a mild concussion. The youth missed two days of school due to the concussion and was fully recovered within one week's time.

A number of contributing factors leading up to the incident were identified after an Incident Review was completed. There was no clear direction when going through the course. Course maintenance was not being completed and there were no safety rules in place concerning how many people were to be on the course at one time.

### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

When conducting activities, constantly re-assess the situation. Conditions are consistently changing while activities take place. If a piece of equipment has shifted or has become unserviceable, stop the activity and correct the situation. Remember, the "do" in Plan-Do-Review does not mean that the group can't pause and revisit its plan and when the activity starts. Monitor the activity as it takes place, and be prepared to make changes if safety concerns arise. You should also have a conversation with the youth about how they can identify issues if a condition has changed and who to tell. The more eyes the better.

## Case 2 — Scouts - not Gymnastics

During a dodgeball game with a Scout Troop, one youth thought to jump over some chairs that had been set up as goals for the game. While in the air, his foot went between the seat of the chair and the back, causing him to trip and fall. When he fell, he reached out with his hands to brace himself against the floor. His wrist broke under the weight of his body. 911 was called. Paramedics took him to the hospital. While doctors set his wrist, the Scout had a minor allergic reaction to the applied anesthetic. He missed three days of school due to the allergic reaction. His total recovery time was five weeks.

### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

Before you start an activity, always ensure you have stated the expected behaviour and rules of a game. It's also a good idea to make sure you are using the right equipment. A chair for a goal post can easily be replaced by a traffic cone, or even a tape marking a spot on the floor. Remove unnecessary obstacles from a game when they aren't needed. Have the youth look around and see if there are any obstacles that they think shouldn't be in the playing area. It's a great learning opportunity.

### Case 3 — Indoor Lantern Fire

During a snowshoeing camp, a Scouter was attempting to light a Coleman lantern. While lighting the lantern, it caught fire. The flames were about half a metre in height. One of the Scouters grabbed the lantern to move it outdoors in order to extinguish the fire. When he did this, fuel spilled on the floor, creating a trail of small fires that managed to burn a Cub's scarf. An order to evacuate the cabin was given. A group of Cubs left using the main door. However, a second group of Cubs that was in the upstairs loft was momentarily trapped, because the loft emergency exit door had become stuck. When the Cubs did get the door open, they found that there were no stairs or ladder to climb down—just a knotted rope. Thankfully, they were all able to get out of the building. The fire was extinguished, but there were serious examples of poor emergency planning and actions.

#### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

Scouters should perform a review on how to operate all fuel-powered devices before they use them. This is to ensure they are passing down proper instructions to their youth, and also so they can become more familiar with the equipment in case of emergencies. Best practice when using fuel devices (such as a lantern or stove) would include storing the fuel in a safe place away from any heat sources, ensuring you have proper ventilation for the area in which you are using the device and making sure all emergency exit paths are clear of any obstacles. When occupying a camp or building, ensure everyone knows where the emergency equipment is located, the proper evacuation routes, the group rally point and the person in charge in case of an emergency. How can you involve the youth in building the emergency plan? How can you ensure that they're aware of the emergency plan? Remember that in an emergency situation, tensions are raised. The better everyone understands the safety protocols, the more efficiently they can exit a building. This will make it much safer for everyone.

### Case 4 — Food Allergies

During a spring camp earlier this year, two Scouts (both of whom are allergic to wheat) ate a meal that contained some wheat. One of the girls had to leave immediately for home in order to take medication that would offset her symptoms. The other Scout was able to take some medication, but the symptoms lasted for weeks after the incident and resulted in her missing a day of school. The camp cook was not aware of the requirements for any allergy restrictions and had no proper training in identifying restricted foods.

#### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

When running a camp, you must come up with a meal planning guide that details who can eat what and ensure you have all the information on the attendees and any possible food allergies. Food that is planned for the camp should also be reviewed before purchase for any possible preservatives that could be harmful for a person with food sensitivities. A good idea is to also provide the parents with a meal plan before the camp so that they can review the prepared meals for their children. Thankfully, the allergies in this case weren't life-threatening to the two youth; however, things could have been much worse. Meal planning can help prevent a serious incident. Involving youth and parents (especially parents of Beavers and Cubs) in the planning of meals is a great way for youth to learn about different food allergies and sensitivities. This may be the first opportunity for the youth to learn what others around them are experiencing in regards to different diets. Meal planning is not only an exercise in safety, it's an exercise in understanding.

## Case 5 — Kub Kar Collision

The following incident occurred during a joint Kub Kar / Beaver Buggy racing activity. Two youth were running around a crowded gym when they collided. Both youth fell to the floor. Only one youth was hurt when he struck his elbow and the back of his head on the floor. Both youth were wearing adequate footwear; however, there was a white powdery substance covering the gym floor. Initially, the youth's elbow became swollen. Suspecting a fractured arm, his mother took him to the hospital. It was determined his elbow was bruised (not broken), but he had sustained a mild concussion. His mother followed concussion protocol throughout the night. The youth member missed a day of school and needed a few nights of rest before being back to normal.

### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

Be aware of your meeting facility and any potential hazards. The substance on the floor was slippery enough to make it seem like they were on ice, and was not a new occurrence. It had been reported to the facility in the past. Organizers could have organized an early cleaning of the floor to remove the substance if the facility was not going to.

Rallies are busy events. Ensure all hands are on deck for maximum supervision. Remind youth that safety is a priority. They need to be aware of their surroundings. Have youth discuss what behaviour is and isn't acceptable at large events, and ensure they know who to report hazards to.

## Case 6 — Fell and Cut

During a Cubs outing, a youth member fell onto a tree stump and cut himself on a broken branch. This created a large deep gash in his leg. Scouters immediately performed first aid. The member was taken to the hospital to get the cut treated. The cut required several layers of stitches and an antibiotic regime. The youth is required to stay off of it for one week.



### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

This incident occurred during an outside explore period of a meeting. Before conducting an outside explore period, a sweep of the area should be made for any hazards. If a hazard is identified, it should be removed from the area. If it can't be removed, the hazard should clearly be identified as an out-of-bounds area. Do this activity with the youth. Have them identify potential hazards in the play area. The best way to build a culture of safety is to build it into everything we do. Eventually, the youth will be able to identify hazards on their own, but it doesn't mean Scouters don't need to keep a watchful eye.

## Case 7 — Tripped Over Toddler

During an indoor game of Capture the Flag, a Scouter was running backwards when he tripped over a toddler that had wandered into the play area. The parent of the toddler had been asked by Scouters to try to keep the toddler out of the older kids' play area on two separate occasions, but was not able to do so. When falling, the Scouter did his best to avoid landing directly on the child. The Scouter ended up hitting his elbow on the floor, breaking two bones. He missed six weeks of work.

### SAFE SCOUTING TIPS

This case is a good example of how external factors can affect your activities. Even though the group expressed its concerns over the toddler interfering with the game, the parent was not effectively challenged. Regardless of if an unsafe action is being taken by a member or if it is being caused by an outside influence, the Scouters in charge have to ensure that the safety expectations are being met. It is their duty to halt the activity until it is safe to resume. Sometimes onlookers can be difficult to deal with, but so is trying to work with a broken elbow. As we build a culture of safety, we're going to empower youth to talk to others about how to play safe and remove hazards.