Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACs) are resources that provide safety standards and guidelines for Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) and Girl Scouts of Northern California (GSNorCal)—approved activities.

GSUSA, GSNorCal, other nationwide 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.

This section provides general safety standards & guidelines by topic that will apply to all activities. Please read and become familiar with all topics in this section. These standards and guidelines are to be used together with the specific safety checkpoints for an individual activity.

Throughout Safety Activity Checkpoints, several individual activities, such as Paddling and Rowing, Climbing and Adventure, and Target Sports, are categorized under related sections to provide continuity as well as the grade level and skill progression.

Volunteer Essentials. A key resource for volunteers in Girl Scouting is the Volunteer Essentials. While Safety Activity Checkpoints focus on safety guidance and parameters, Volunteer Essentials will address an array of topics such as Engaging Girls and Families, Troop Management, Product Program, Troop Finances, and the Leader’s Guide to Success. All Girl Scout volunteers are instructed to review, understand and practice the principles and standards in both Volunteer Essentials and Safety Activity Checkpoints. Be on the lookout for the newly revised Volunteer Essentials that will be launched in the Fall of 2019!

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 the 2019-20 Safety Activity Checkpoints

The 2019-20 Safety Activity Checkpoints have 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.
The Risk Management team at Girl Scouts of Northern California (GSNorCal) has enhanced each Safety Activity Checkpoint to account for California state laws, our council’s insurance coverage, council practices and procedures, and our own council forms and resources. Where possible, we have added links to facilitate finding additional information.

The 2019-20 Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints 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).

**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.

**Consider these safety guidelines 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 GSNorCal’s approval is required to perform the activity. There are two 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 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.”

- **Not required.** Activities that have been traditionally and historically accepted 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 GSNorCal 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. Arrange 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.** There are different adult supervision requirements for Girl Scout troop meetings as compared to events outside of the regular Girl Scout troop meeting such as outings, activities, camping and travel. Activities and travel outside of the regular troop meeting space require more adult supervision.

**For Troop Meetings:** The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 12 Girl Scout Daisies
- 20 Girl Scout Brownies
- 25 Girl Scout Juniors
- 25 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 30 Girl Scout Seniors
- 30 Girl Scout Ambassadors
There should be one extra adult for every additional:

- 1–6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1–8 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1–10 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1–12 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1–15 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1–15 Girl Scout Ambassadors

*For Outings, Activities, Travel and Camping*: The adult-to-girl ratio is two unrelated volunteers, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 1-6 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 Checkpoint* 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. 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.

*Buddy System*. Always 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.

*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 GSNorCal’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 affect the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard instructor is 18, qualified lifeguard of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.
**Itinerary and Key Contacts.** Give an itinerary to a contact person who is staying 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.

**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.

**GSNorCal requires you to use facilities listed on the Approved Vendor List.** The approved vendors/facilities listed have met the safety and insurance guidelines for GSNorCal and GSUSA. The Approved Vendor List is updated regularly.

**Troops are NOT limited to the facilities and vendors on the Approved Vendors List.** If the vendor your troop wants to use is not on the list, BEFORE scheduling your activity, tell the vendor that because your activity is considered high adventure by GSUSA safety guidelines, there are a few steps to complete in order for any troop from GSNorCal to use the facility. [Volunteer Essentials Safety-Wise](https://www.girlscouts.org/volunteer/center) Approved Vendor List.

The vendor needs to provide GSNorCal with a copy of their Certificate of Insurance (COI) [MONEY: Contracts & Certificates of Insurance](https://www.girlscouts.org/about/girl-scout-finances) that:

- Indicates at least $1,000,000 General Liability Insurance
- Lists Girl Scouts of Northern California as a Certificate Holder
- Lists Girl Scouts of Northern California as Additionally Insured

In addition, the vendor must agree to follow the Safety Activity Checkpoints related to the activities they offer.

Vendors can apply to become approved vendors by contacting the Risk & Management & Travel team, [travel@girlscoutsnorcal.org](mailto:travel@girlscoutsnorcal.org)

**IMPORTANT:** If a vendor/facility refuses to follow the safety guidelines listed above, then the council will not be able to endorse this vendor/facility on our [Approved Vendors List](https://www.girlscouts.org/volunteer/center) OR approve trips/outings for troops to use this vendor/facility.

Please note that approved vendors are subject to change depending on when their Certificate of Insurance (COI) Policy expires. If a vendor’s Certificate of Insurance (COI) policy expires and we are unable to reach the vendor to renew the policy, we must remove the vendor from the list until we receive the updated COI. Please contact the Risk Management & Travel team with any questions at [travel@girlscoutsnorcal.org](mailto:travel@girlscoutsnorcal.org)

**Activity Accident Insurance.** Activity accident insurance is a supplemental health insurance that protects registered Girl Scout members. Registered members are automatically covered under activity accident insurance when participating in all Girl Scout events and activities including trips that involve two (or less) overnight stays.

*Important! The Basic Plan does not cover trips of more than two overnight stays. Trips that are three overnights or more are not covered under automatic activity accident insurance. Also, non-members are not automatically covered and international trips are not automatically covered. Activity accident insurance must be individually purchased for coverage under these scenarios.*
So, to clarify, you will need to purchase extra activity accident insurance for outings and events that:

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

When planning trips, always consult GSNorCal insurance@girlscoutsnorcal.org to see if extra activity accident insurance is needed.

**Emergency Preparation.** Familiarize yourself with basic first aid, emergency response requirements, and other precautions. Know how far away and where 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**

**What to do if there is an Accident**

Although you hope the worst never happens, you must observe council procedures for handling accidents and fatalities. At the scene of an accident, first provide all possible care for the injured person. Follow established council procedures for obtaining medical assistance and immediately reporting the emergency. To do this, you must always have on hand the Council Emergency Number (1-877-636-1912), parents/guardians and emergency services such as the police, fire department or hospital.

Contact GSNorCal by calling the 24-hour emergency answering service at 1-877-636-1912. After receiving a report of an accident, council staff will immediately arrange for additional assistance at the scene, if needed, and will notify parents/guardians, as appropriate.

If a Girl Scout needs emergency medical care as the result of an accident or injury, first contact emergency medical services, and then follow council procedures for accidents and incidents. Your adherence to these procedures is critical, especially with regard to notifying parents or guardians. If the media is involved, let council-designated staff discuss the incident with media representatives.

In the event of a fatality or other serious accident, the police must be notified and a responsible volunteer must remain at the scene at all times. In the case of a fatality, do not disturb the victim or surroundings and follow police instructions. Do not share information about the accident with anyone but the police, GSNorCal staff, and, if applicable, insurance representatives or legal counsel.

**When Someone Needs Emergency Care**

Girls need to receive proper instruction in how to care for themselves and others in emergencies. They also need to learn the importance of reporting to volunteers any accidents, illnesses or unusual behaviors during Girl Scout activities. You can help girls by keeping in mind the following:

- Know what to report.
- Establish and practice procedures for weather emergencies.
- Know the type of extreme weather to expect in your area (e.g. tornadoes, hurricanes and lightning). Please consult with your council for the most relevant information for you to share with girls.
- Establish and practice procedures for such circumstances as fire evacuation, lost persons and building-security issues. Every girl and adult volunteer must know how to act in these situations. For example, you and the girls, with the help of a fire department representative, should design a fire evacuation plan for meeting places used by the group.
• Assemble a well-stocked first-aid kit that is always accessible. First-aid administered in the first few minutes can make a significant difference in the severity of an injury. In an emergency, secure professional medical assistance as soon as possible, normally by calling 911, and then administer first aid, if appropriately trained.

**First-Aid/CPR**
For many activities, Girl Scouts recommends that at least one adult volunteer be first-aid/CPR-certified. For that reason, if you have the opportunity to get trained in council-approved first-aid/CPR, do it! You can take advantage of first-aid/CPR training offered by chapters of the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or the American Heart Association.

As a partner of Girl Scouts, American Red Cross offers discounts on certification courses. Caution: First-aid/CPR training that is available entirely online does not satisfy Girl Scouts' requirements. Such courses do not offer enough opportunities to practice and receive feedback on your technique. If taking a course not offered by one of the organizations listed in the previous paragraph, or any course that has online components, get approval from your support team or GSNorCal prior to enrolling in the course. info@gsnorcal.org

**First-Aider**
*General First Aider.* A general first-aider is an adult volunteer who has taken Girl Scout-approved first-aid and CPR training that includes specific instructions for child CPR, as well as AED (Automated External Defibrillator) training.

If, through the American Red Cross, National Safety Council, EMP America, or American Heart Association, you have a chance to be fully trained in first-aid and CPR, doing so may make your activity planning go a little more smoothly.

*Advanced First Aider.* An advanced first aider is an adult with general first aid certification with additional health, safety or emergency response expertise such as, for example, a physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; wilderness training, certified lifeguard or emergency medical technician (EMT).

The Safety Activity Checkpoints always tell you when a first-aider needs to be present. Since activities can take place in a variety of locations, the presence of a first-aider and the qualifications they need to have are based on the remoteness and scope of the activity. For example, if you take a two-mile hike in an area that has cell phone reception and service along the entire route and EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is no more than 30 minutes away at all times, the first-aider will not need to have knowledge of wilderness first aid. If, on the other hand, you take the same two-mile hike in a more remote area with no cell phone service and where EMS is more than 30 minutes away, the first-aider must have knowledge of wilderness first aid (see the chart below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to EMS Minimum Level of First Aid Required</th>
<th>Level of First Aid Required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 minutes</td>
<td>First Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 30 minutes</td>
<td>Wilderness First Aid (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Although a WFR is not required, it is strongly recommended when traveling with groups in areas that are greater than 30 minutes from EMS.
It is important to understand the differences between a first-aid course, and a wilderness-rated course. Although standard first-aid training provides basic incident response, wilderness-rated courses include training on remote-assessment skills, as well as emergency first-aid response, including evacuation techniques, to use when EMS is not readily available.

**Note**: The presence of an **advanced first-aider** is required at resident camp. For large events—200 people or more—there should be, additional to regular first aider(s), **one advanced first-aider** for every 200 participants. The following healthcare providers may also serve as advanced first-aiders for large groups: physician; physician’s assistant; nurse practitioner; registered nurse; licensed practical nurse; paramedic; military medic; and emergency medical technician.

**First-Aid Kit**
Make sure a general first-aid kit is available at your group meeting place and accompanies girls on any activity (including transportation to and from the activity). Please be aware that you may need to provide this kit if one is not available at your meeting place. You can purchase a Girl Scout first-aid kit, you can buy a commercial kit, or you and the girls can assemble a kit yourselves. The Red Cross offers a list of potential items in its Anatomy of a First Aid Kit (note that the Red Cross’s suggested list includes aspirin, which you will not be at liberty to give to girls without direct parent/guardian permission). You can also customize a kit to cover your specific needs, including flares, treatments for frostbite or snake bites and the like.

In addition to standard materials, all kits should contain GSNorCal’s emergency answering service’s telephone number (1-877-636-1912), Girl Scout activity insurance forms, parent consent forms and health histories may also be included. Please note that the emergency answering service is for emergency use only. Regular Girl Scout business calls should be made to 1-800-447-4475.

**Leave Not Trace.** Search the web for tips on environmental responsibility, and remember our principle of [Leave no trace](#). In fact, Girl Scouts have a long tradition of leaving an area better than we found it. Doing so will teach girls responsibility and safeguard your troop and GSNorCal from complications or issues involving the use of public property.

**Modeling the Right Behavior.** Never use illegal drugs. Do not consume alcohol, smoke, vape 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 GSNorCal for target sport activities. Always obey the law, for example, by not talking on a phone or texting while driving.

**Money-Earning Activities.** Safety is an important consideration throughout money-earning activities, including the Girl Scout Cookie program and other council-sponsored product programs. During Girl Scout product programs, 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 GSNorCal at [info@gsnorcal.org](mailto:info@gsnorcal.org)

**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.

**Overnight Trips.** Prepare girls to be away from home by involving them in the planning process so they know what to expect. On trips where male volunteers are part of the group, it is not appropriate for them to sleep in the same space as girl members. Always support and maintain an all-girl atmosphere for sleeping quarters. Men may participate only when separate sleeping quarters and bathrooms are available for their use. Men
should not have to walk through girls’ sleeping quarters for entrance, exit or to access to restrooms. In some circumstances, such as a museum or mall overnight where hundreds of girls are participating, this type of accommodation may not be possible. If this is the case, men do not supervise girls in the sleeping area of the event and the adult volunteer-to-girl ratio is adjusted accordingly.

An exception is made for family members during events such as parent-daughter or family overnights where one family may sleep together in an area specifically designated to accommodate families. Also, please make note of the following:

- Each participant must have her own bed.
- Parent/guardian permission must be obtained if girls are to share a bed.
- Girls and adults do not share a bed; however, GSNorCal makes exceptions for mothers and daughters.
- It is not mandatory that an adult sleep in the sleeping area (tent, cabin, or designated area) with the girls, but if an adult female does share the sleeping area, there should always be two unrelated adult females present.

**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 homeowner 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.

**Permission Slips.** It is imperative to secure a signed permission slip from a girl’s parent or guardian for any trip or special activity outside the troop meeting space. This applies to all girls under the age of 18. In most cases, one parental consent is legally acceptable. However, there may be circumstances regarding a custody situation or a particular standard in our council area where dual parental consent is required. For international trips, both parents’ / guardians’ written consent is generally required. If there is a question about single versus dual parental consent, please consult GSNorCal and we can consult local or state laws for specific legal guidance.

**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, Go-Karting, and other activities. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is 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 are 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, and lip balm
- Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as caving/spelunking
- Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside, in order to prevent ticks and blisters
- Watch, compass, and maps
- Insect repellent
- Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities
- Bottle of drinking water, and healthy snacks
- Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

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

**Transportation.** Keep in mind that 15-passenger vans have been flagged as unsafe by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and therefore, are not permitted for use in transporting girls. For chartered buses or rented vehicles, always ensure the possession of safety credentials and commercial driving licenses, and the use of seatbelts. Check GSNorCal’s Approved Vendor List for approved charter bus and chartered vehicle companies.

As stated earlier, 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.

**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, snowstorm, 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.

**Understanding Which Activities Are Not Permitted**

In a challenging, learn-by-doing environment like Girl Scouts, it is 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 GSNorCal insurance@gsnorcal.org 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 primarily to protect girls. The prohibitions also safeguard the financial and reputational well-being of GSNorCal and the Girl Scout organization. Additionally, council insurance may not always cover a specific activity based on safety risk factors, as described above.

GSUSA and GSNorCal 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
- 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

**High Risk Activities.** Hang gliding, parasailing, zorbing, and parachuting/skydiving 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.

**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 and will not cover this activity.

**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. Very large majorities 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.

**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 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.

**Privately Owned Aircraft.** Flying in privately owned aircraft is a very clear exclusion under GSUSA and GSNorCal’s commercial general liability insurance policies. In the event of an incident involving an aircraft accident, GSNorCal would be financially liable for potential liability and resulting lawsuits. Even with a specific non-owned aviation liability policy, 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.

**Remember to have a specific process in place for handling requests regarding activities not addressed in the 2019-20 Safety Activity Checkpoints.**

- First, investigate whether the activity is similar to another activity.
- Consider whether the proposed activity requires any expert supervision or special certification.
- If there is still a question, always consult GSNorCal for clarification and approval.

**Other Actions Girls and Volunteers Should Not Take**
For legal reasons, and in order to preserve the integrity of our organization, there are other activities that girls and volunteers are not permitted to participate in while representing Girl Scouts. 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
- Avoid fundraising for other organizations

**Overall Health, Well Being and Inclusivity**

**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. A complete health history form should be submitted to the troop leader when adults are participating or chaperoning a Girl Scout trip or activity. A new health history form should be completed every year or when anything changes in a girl’s health history during the membership year.

Health history forms should reflect any significant medical condition, health issue, or allergies. The form should 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 are shared with those who have a need to know, for example, the site or camp physician or nurse.

Keep a current and signed health history form for each girl and adult 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.

**Health Exams.** Girl Scout councils also require a health exam for any activity that is three overnights or longer, which includes resident camp. Again, follow GSNorCal’s guidelines with respect to health exams. The
health exam needs to have been completed within two years of the last date of the trip for a girl or adult to participate, though within one year is preferred. For resident camp, the health exam is required within one year of the start date. A licensed physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician’s assistant, or a registered nurse can give a health exam. The medical provider must sign the health exam form. GSNorCal requires a current health history form and exam for adult volunteers who participate in trips three nights or more.

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 GSNorCal staff responsible for coordinating them. All health and medical information are 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. We recommend that health history forms be kept in a sealed envelope until they are needed.

Health history forms should be destroyed after three years.

**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. In the state of California, SB276 is a senate bill that is currently being reviewed by our legislators. GSNorCal is closely following this senate bill and will proceed in accordance with the state law 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 GSNorCal, 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.

**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-toed 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.

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. EPA Find the Repellant that is Right for You. To learn more about safely using DEET directly on the skin and on children, check out EPA DEET. In addition, for more on skin-applied and clothing-only repellent education, review EPA Insect Repellents.

**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, and avoiding clique behavior, practicing fairness, and showing positive and helpful communication with others.

**Physical or Sexual Abuse.** Physical, verbal or sexual abuse of girls is forbidden. Sexual pressure, sexual advances, improper touching, sexual communication, such as text messaging and sexual activity of any kind with girl members, is not tolerated. If you witness or experience any behavior of this nature, notify the
appropriate council staff immediately. Volunteers are responsible for following GSNorCal’s guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around physical, verbal or sexual abuse with respect to girls. Check out the Volunteer Essentials Safety-Wise section on what to if you witness, experience, or suspect abuse for guidance.

**Child Abuse.** All states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands have specific laws which identify persons who are required to report suspected child abuse to an appropriate agency. Therefore, if you witness or suspect child abuse or neglect, whether inside or outside of Girl Scouting, always notify your council immediately and follow your council’s guidelines for reporting your concerns to the proper agency within your state, as outlined in the Volunteer Essentials Safety-Wise section outlined above.

For additional information, please check the following resources:
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: [Child Welfare](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cp/)
- How to Report Suspected Child Maltreatment: [Reporting Abuse](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cp/)
- Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect: [Mandatory Reporters](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cp/)

**Mental Health and Safety.** As an adult volunteer overseeing the activities and behaviors of young girls, and similar to child abuse, you may witness other signs of harmful tendencies, such as self-harm. Self-harm can take a physical form such as cutting, burning, bruising, excessive scratching, hair pulling, poisoning, or drug use. Other tendencies of self-harm are suicidal ideations that can be expressed verbally or with the written word. Another harmful expression involves harm to others which can be detected verbally or with physical aggression. If a situation of this nature is observed or comes to your attention in any form, always notify an appropriate council staff member, e.g., your VDM (Volunteer Development Manager) immediately and follow your GSNorCal’s guidelines with respect to next steps.

**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 council guidelines for reporting any direct information or concern around abuse or neglect with respect to girls. [Volunteer Essentials](https://www.gsnorcal.org/)

**Equal Treatment.** Girl Scouts welcomes all members, regardless of race, ethnicity, background, disability, family structure, religious beliefs, gender identification, 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.

**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](https://www.disabledworld.com/). Whenever possible, the individual Safety Activity Checkpoint will provide resources specific to that sport or activity. Our goal is to include all girls with a desire to participate in Girl Scouting.