

## Sledding & Tobogganing: Safety Activity Checkpoint

**Council Approval:** Not required

**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A



**Includes:** Snow tubing

### About Sledding and Tobogganing

The history of sledding is quite interesting: Traditionally sleds were used to transport goods and people in places where wheels could not operate. Toboggans made of poles tied together with leather were used by Native Americans to carry food, clothing, and other items through snow. Today, people of all ages enjoy sledding, tobogganing, and tubing as an enjoyable outdoor winter activity and sport. Today, tobogganing is even a formal sport in the winter Olympics.

Sleds and toboggans will vary in design, shape, and material and can range from round plastic discs to rectangular wood structures with metal runners. A toboggan is typically a long, flat-

bottomed sled made of thin boards that curve upward in a C-shape at one end. Snow tubes are inflatable, doughnut-shaped rubber or plastic inner tubes similar to those used in water tubing, but with dimpled centers.

Girls must stick to designated sledding, tobogganing, and snow-tubing hills away from roads or heavily wooded areas to enjoy sledding safely. They should also receive basic instruction in sledding safety, conduct rules, and learn to perform basic steering skills, including how to slow down and stop.

Some ski resorts will offer snow-tubing and tobogganing classes within specially designated areas, so check with your local ski resorts if you have any nearby.

#### **Learn More:**

- Competitive and Olympic sledding: [Team USA](#)
- More on sledding: [Sled Riding](#)

### **Include Girls with Disabilities**

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about resources and information for people with disabilities at [Disabled Sports USA](#).

### **Safety Activity Checkpoints**

**Select a safe site.** Ensure that sledding is conducted in an area free of vehicles and that the site has no obstructions such as rocks, poles, benches, trees, or signposts. All group members should know the nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate activity time in advance. Avoid sledding near streets or highways.

**Make smart decisions.** Girls should slide downhill feet first (like Olympians) to reduce the potential for head injuries from collisions. Use of helmets is strongly recommended.

**Ensure girls are not towed.** Girl Scouts are not permitted to be towed on sleds, toboggans, or tubes behind a motor vehicle of any kind including snowmobiles. Never use a motorized vehicle to pull a sled or tube.

**Get a weather report.** On the morning of the activity, check [Weather.com](#) or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with girls.

**Practice safe sledding, tobogganing, and snow tubing.** Conditions should be monitored, and breaks taken to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Girls and adults must agree on the portion of slope to be used for sledding and the portion to be used for walking uphill.

**Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED, who is prepared to handle cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, and altitude sickness. 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.

### **Safety and Recommended Gear**

- Hat, mittens, or warm gloves
- Waterproof winter boots
- Bicycle or ski helmets (may be required by some organized sledding facilities)

- Heavy, wool insulating socks (avoid cotton socks)
- Layered clothing
- Thermal underwear or long johns
- Snow pants, snowsuit, or waterproof pants over warm layers

## Girl Scouts of Northern California's Approval Process for Sledding and Tobogganing

- **Sledding and Tobogganing are considered high-adventure activities and must be pre-approved by the council.**
- **Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form:** Submit the online [Trip or High-Adventure Approval Form](#) to council at least 4-6 weeks prior to your activity.
- **High-Adventure Approved Vendor List:** GSNorCal troops/groups must select a [high-adventure vendor](#) from the High-Adventure Approved Vendor List, which consists of organizations that meet Girl Scouts safety and insurance requirements for the activity. For the safety of our members, before a troop uses a high-adventure site/vendor for a troop or service unit event, the council must approve the high-adventure site/vendor. This process is designed to ensure a safe experience and protect the council's and volunteer's legal interests.
- **Adding high-adventure facilities to the Approved Vendor List:** If your preferred vendor is not listed on the High-Adventure Approved Vendor list, please follow the simple steps in the [Volunteer Essentials](#) for adding High Adventure Vendors.