

# Winter activity Safety

## SUMMARY

There is magic to camping in winter. It is one of the most challenging outdoor adventures. However, potentially extreme weather conditions, cold temperatures, and unique hazards associated with outdoor winter activities require careful planning to ensure safety.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Keeping warm is the most important part of cold-weather camping and outdoor activities. Use the “**C-O-L-D**” method to stay warm.

- **C = Clean:** Insulation is only effective when the insulating layers are kept clean and fluffy. Dirt, grime, and sweat can reduce the ability of a garment to keep you warm.
- **O = Overheating:** Avoid overheating by adjusting the layers of your clothing to keep from sweating during warmer temperatures. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Avoid energy drinks (sports drinks are OK).
- **L = Loose layers:** A steady flow of warm blood is essential to keeping all parts of your body heated. Wear several loosely fitting layers of clothing and footwear that will allow maximum insulation without blocking your circulation. Having clothing that is brightly colored (orange or red) is also a good idea, so hunters and sportsmen can see you in snowy conditions. Always wear a hat.
- **D = Dry:** Sweaty, damp clothing and skin can cause your body to cool very quickly, possibly leading to frostbite and/or hypothermia. Keep dry by avoiding clothes that absorb moisture. Always brush snow off your clothes before you enter a heated area. Keep the clothing around your neck loose so that body heat and moisture can escape instead of soaking through your layers.

Eating the right type of food when camping or playing in the cold also is important.

One of the best ways to remember what is appropriate to eat when you are spending time outside in cold weather is to use good nutrition to build the fire within. Make sure your food consumption includes sugars, which act like a fire starter; carbohydrates and proteins, which act as kindling; and fats that produce the energy needed to keep the fire burning and your body running at peak performance. Hydration is as important in winter as in summer. Drink when thirsty. Plan on hydration stops hourly. Water or “sports” drinks that contain some sugar and electrolytes are good for hydration, but avoid “energy” drinks.

## RESOURCES

- [\*Guide to Safe Scouting—Winter Activities\*](#)
- Fieldbook (available at [scoutshop.org](http://scoutshop.org))