

Cold weather camping tips.

"Be prepared!" Does this sound familiar? I hope all of you say yes.

Take this to heart for the campouts during cooler times of the year.

Recommendations:

Make sure your sleeping bag is rated for the temperature. As a rule, if the low is forecast as 45 then be sure your sleeping bag is rated 10 or so degrees lower to 32. Some of the local camping suppliers sell sleeping bag liners for 10 to 15 bucks. These liners can take your sleeping bag down another 10 degrees for comfort. These do work.

Warmers are great, you know those break the inside packet to allow the chemicals inside to heat up when mixed together. They can be addicting, though. On cold nights you can toss one or two inside your sleeping bag to knock off the chill before crawling into it.

Morning shock experienced when putting on your clothes can be avoided by putting your clothes inside your sleeping bag with you as you sleep. Your body will keep the clothes warm. You might want to roll your clothes up lengthwise and put them on the other side of your bag from the zipper. Sleep on top of your coat, as it provides an additional ground barrier and extra padding.

Cots and air mattresses can make your night sleep colder. Plain air mattresses have zero insulation value. Cots allow air to circulate underneath you. You will sleep warmer if you use an insulated mat between you and the ground. Most of the self inflation mats have a built in barrier to protect you from the cold.

Bathroom visits are no fun when you're in a nice toasty sleeping bag and the outside temp. is around freezing. Consider bringing a plastic beverage bottle with a working cap. You may 'use' the bottle inside the tent when nature calls. After you get up later in the morning, you may pour the contents into the latrine and pitch the bottle into the trash. Latrines are NOT for bottles, cans, or anything other than body waste, and the paper. The Scout camps, by the way, inspect the latrines for trash, bottles, cans, etc. If found, someone from the Troop, not the Ranger or Campmaster, will have to go 'fishing'. Keep this in mind when using the facilities at all campgrounds.

Dress Warmly and Stay Dry - Wear proper clothing to prevent cold injury

To prevent getting too cold, wear proper clothing and shoes, such as:

- A hat and a scarf or facemask. Up to 80% of total body heat loss can occur through exposed head and neck areas.
- Several layers of loose-fitting clothing.
- Be sure outer layer of clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind.

- Inner layers of clothing made of wool, silk, polypropylene, down, or Thinsulate will hold more body heat than cotton. These are good insulators and will prevent loss of body heat even when the fabric gets wet.
- Wind- and waterproof outer layers.
- Sleeves that are snug at the wrists.
- Wool socks and waterproof boots that fit well. Socks, boots, and shoes must fit closely but not be tight or have any pressure points. In putting on socks and boots, carefully smooth out all wrinkles in socks.
- Mittens rather than gloves since mitten are warmer.

Stay dry—wet clothing chills the body rapidly as wet clothing loses 90% of its insulating value. Excess perspiration will increase heat loss, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm. Do not ignore shivering. It's an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors. Eat a well-balanced diet and drink warm, caffeine-free liquids to maintain fluid levels.

Even though this is winter and not a hot Texas summer, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, so you won't become dehydrated.