

To: **Scouts/Scout Parents**
From: Francis
Date: January 25, 2006
Re: Winter Camping/Winter Outdoor Activities

The following information is a summary of the Winter Camping Tips provided by Steve Bujewski. Steve's speech can be summarized in one word, WISH.

If you remember WISH, you will remember how to dress for Winter Camping or outdoor Winter activities. All you need to remember is the last time you were cold at a Winter outdoor activity, and WISH you had dressed more appropriately.

W - WICKING, or base layer
I - INSULATING layer
S - SHELL layer
H - HAT/HOOD

WICKING

WICKING or base layer is the first layer of clothing that must be worn to insure warmth. This layer of clothes must be comprised of polypropylene. Polypropylene wicks the moisture off your skin. This keeps you dry and warm. Steve recommends long underwear made of polypropylene. That includes a long sleeve top and bottom. Do not wear cotton underwear as cotton will absorb water rather than wick the water from your skin. The wicking or base layer must be polypropylene.

INSULATING

INSULATING layer is your second layer. This layer can be wool or fleece. Wool is the preferable layer if you have it. Wool will keep you warm even if it is wet. Locating wool pants may be difficult. Therefore, you may need to look for fleece pants. If neither wool nor fleece pants are available, then cotton pants/jeans can be worn. However wool or fleece is preferred. A wool sweater and wool socks are ideal. If a wool sweater is not available, then a fleece sweater. Avoid wearing cotton socks against your skin. If your feet get wet, wool socks will keep you warm.

SHELL

SHELL layer is your outer jacket and outer pants. The ideal material is Gortex. Another excellent brand is Tempest by Viking. The outer shell layer is made up 100% polyester with PVC backing. This material is 100% waterproof and at the same time, breathes, which allows moisture to escape. A Gortex jacket is essential in keeping warm during Winter camping/Winter outdoor activities. Gortex pants are strongly recommended. If you are sweating or exposed to rain, your insulating layer will get wet if you do not have Gortex pants. If you do not have Gortex pants, traditional snow pants is better than no shell layer. Snow pants will keep your insulating layer dry from the outside element such as snow or rain. The downside of snow pants is that they do not breathe. Therefore, snow pants holds in the moisture from your body when you sweat. Hopefully, if you do not have Gortex and are wearing snow pants, you are at least wearing the wicking/base layer of polypropolene. This will keep moisture off your skin.

HAT/HOOD

HAT/HOOD layer is absolutely essential for Winter camping/outdoor activities. If you forget a hat/hood, you will be cold, even if you are wearing the wicking/base layer, the insulating layer and the Gortex shell layer. A wool hat is recommended. If you do not have a wool hat, it is recommended that your jacket have a hood, which will act as the shell layer. Your hat represents the insulating layer which is recommended to be wool or fleece. The ideal scenario is to wear a wool hat with a jacket that has a Gortex hood attached.

FEET

The next and also very important part of your body that must be kept warm and dry are your feet. Consider your feet like your body. You want to make sure that your socks are polypropolene or wool. Polypropolene wicks the water off your skin/feet. Wool will keep your feet warm even if it is wet. The shell are your shoes. Waterproof boots lined with thinsulate is strongly recommended. 80% of you wear gym shoes no matter what we tell you. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't force him to drink it.

COSTS

Many of you are reading this and are saying "sounds great, but we can't afford it". That is absolutely not true. With the exception of the wicking/base layer, everything else can be purchased at a discount department store, such as Wal-Mart, Target, K-Mart, Kohls, Sears Essentials, Home Depot, Menards, Lowe's. With the exception of the wicking/base layer, I personally purchased all of my items at the following locations, thrift stores, Salvation Army Outlets, goodwill, St. Vincent DePaul, and garage sales.

GARAGE SALE/THRIFT STORE

It is amazing what you will find at a garage sales or a thrift store. On any given date, thrift stores are loaded with wool sweaters or wool socks. They rarely charge more than \$3.00 per sweater or \$2.00 for a pair of wool socks. I have always been lucky in finding Gortex jackets at thrift stores. In my experience, the cost ranges from \$10.00 to \$15.00. Locating a Gortex jacket requires you to spend some time going thru the hundreds of jackets that are hanging in any given thrift store. However, the search is well worth it. Most people only know the location of only one or two thrift stores. If you refer to the Yellow Pages or the Internet, you will find that there are hundreds of thrift stores in Chicago. Both Russ and I bought Gortex jackets at the Jefferson Park Church sale for one dollar!

BOOTS

The other item that is in great quantity at thrift stores, are waterproof insulated boots. I rarely pay more than \$5.00 for such boots. Some scouts may not want to wear second hand boots. That is their prerogative. However, the cost of brand new, waterproof, insulated lined boots are very expensive. Based on my experience, most teenagers would rather spend \$100.00 on gym shoes and not on boots, especially since their feet are always growing. For some families, it does not make any sense to pay \$100.00 for a pair of boots when they will only be used for one year or possibly one Winter, and worn only five or six times. Therefore, the boots are not purchased. That is when you resort to the thrift store for your \$5.00 pair of waterproof insulated lined boots. An argument I have heard which in my opinion is not true, is that second hand boots never fit properly, since they were previously worn by someone else and that other person has a different size foot. I would agree with that argument when it comes to everyday work shoes or gym shoes, but not Winter boots. Winter boots are rarely worn more than once per week, and sometimes once per month. When I was growing up, I had two older brothers. Therefore, I do not think I ever had a pair of shoes that were not worn by one of my two older brothers, until I was in highschool and could afford to buy my own shoes. I do not recommend that you buy secondhand gym shoes, or daily work boots, but strongly recommend that you buy second hand Winter waterproof lined and insulated boots, especially when you/your son grows out of his shoes every year.

POLYPROPYLENE

The only item on the WISH list that is difficult to find at a thrift store or garage sale are polypropylene clothing such as long underwear. If you go to one of the high end outdoor sporting goods stores, you can easily pay \$50 to \$100.00 for polypropylene long underwear, top and bottom. However if you go to Farm & Fleet, Wal-Mart, Kohl's, etc, you will pay substantially less.

HAT/HOOD

Regarding hat/hood, a hood holds in more heat than a hat. You are always better off having both. A hooded jacket is preferable over a hooded sweatshirt when you are outside. A hooded jacket provides you with the shell layer and the hat provides you with the insulated layer. If you are sleeping, a hooded sweatshirt will keep you warmer than a hat. As far as sleeping, you are by far better off wearing flannel pajamas or warm pajamas, a hooded sweatshirt, a hat, and warm socks such as wool or heavy cotton socks.

PILLOWS

It is recommended that you bring an old pillowcase and use that as your pillow for sleeping. Stuff the pillowcase with the clothing that you will be wearing in the morning. This way, your clothing will stay warm. You will also not have to get out of your sleeping bag to get dress since your clothing will be in your sleeping bag.

AIR MATTRESSES

As far as air mattresses, please avoid the air mattresses that require a lot of air. The more air in between yourself and the ground, the colder you will be. Therefore, you are much better off sleeping on foam rubber, than an air mattress that requires you to blow it up. The self- inflatable air mattresses are fine since they do not require a lot of air and are low to the ground. Please make sure to bring a newspaper with you. The pages from the newspaper should be laid on the ground and/or the bottom of your tent. You should then lay out your foam rubber or self inflatable air mattress on top of the newspaper. Thereafter, unroll your sleeping bag.

SLEEPING BAG

Take out your sleeping bag as soon as you arrive at camp, to allow your sleeping bag to fill up with air. If you are sleeping in a tent with another scout or two other scouts, it is a good idea to bring an extra blanket to lay over both of you or all three of you. This way, any heat that may escape from your sleeping bag may be trapped in the blanket.

TENT

For Winter camping, you are much better off with a one or two man tent, than a four man tent. In the Summer, a four man Eureka is ideal for two people. However, with Winter camping, you are much better off sleeping in a two man tent with two people. If you don't have room in your tent for your pack, keep your pack in your tent's vestibule or outside of your tent under a tarp. Your clothing should be kept in the tent and the clothing you will be wearing in the morning should be in your pillow case. This way, it does not matter how cold it gets outside. If you have medication that is in liquid form, it is recommended to keep that in the tent or in your pillowcase so that it does not freeze. Please do not forget to empty any water containers before you go to bed. More likely than not, they will be frozen solid in the morning.

WISH

The bottom line with Winter camping or any outdoor activity, is that when you are cold, you WISH that you had dressed properly. Therefore, before you leave the house, please WISH YOURSELF WARM, DRY AND COMFORTABLE.