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## Stove Safety

Stoves are one of the biggest sources of injury on the trail. The following guidelines will help assure that your crew operates them in a safe manner.

1. Recall from an earlier Watchu Gram about organizing your crew that one advisor, the "Health and Safety Advisor", should be assigned to oversee all stove and fuel operations. This advisor will be the guarantor of safe stove procedures and operation, and should be present when the Scouts are using or handling the stoves and/or fuel - at all times. Even though an advisor is present, remember taking care of, fueling, and using the stoves are all the responsibility of the scouts.
2. Always carry a stove in a stuff sack designed for the stove. And carry the "stove in its sack" inside a plastic bag (not a zip lock.) Close the plastic bag with a goose neck and rubber band to prevent fuel damage to your pack, clothing, and equipment.
3. Also carry the fuel bottles in plastic bags, closed with a goose neck and rubber band.
4. Stoves and fuel should never be carried in the same pack as food to avoid contaminating the food with an accidental spill despite the above precautions. Many crews have the "Health and Safety Advisor" carry the stoves and fuel, and other crew gear to compensate for not carrying any food packages.
5. Always release the pressure prior to packing your stoves. This will reduce leaking.
6. When in use, always place the stoves on the ground. Never on a log, or a table, or anything more than a inch or two off the ground. Many a Scout has been severely scalded or burned by a stove knocked off an above ground platform. Also, to further reduce injury due to accidental contact with the stoves, only the cooks enter the trail kitchen after the stoves are lit. The trail kitchen should be located near, but not in, the fire ring for your campsite.
7. Never light a wet stove. The excess fuel from the pumping action will mix with the water and spread fuel over the outside of the stove. Right before your eyes your stove will turn it into a torch. If this should happen, you must turn the stove off immediately. However, this won't necessarily extinguish the flame. Why? Simply because the burning fuel is on the outer surface of the stove. Hopefully, it will burn out in a few seconds. If it does not, the stove must be smothered quickly.

Keep a damp cloth or small towel in the trail kitchen next to the stove for this kind of emergency.

8. **The Two-Stove Method:** You may hear experienced crews speak of how they use two stoves to heat one pot. It works great, saves fuel (much quicker boil), and gets you through the meal lickety-split. You will hear more about this method and the associated safety procedures at the Watchu Adventure.
9. Stoves, fuel bottles, fuel, and lighters cannot be carried onboard commercial aircraft, either in carry-on or checked baggage. The June Briefing agenda will include procedures for mailing the stoves and fuel bottles to Philmont

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**Tip:** On Philmont Day #2, check your stoves before leaving Base Camp.

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**Bonus Tip:** Often the "Health and Safety Advisor" carries the crew first aid kit in addition to the stoves and fuel. Keep the first aid kit in a zip lock bag or a plastic bag with a goose neck. During the day in camp, the first aid kit is stored under the dining fly and in close proximity to the trail kitchen. At night it goes up in the bear bags. All members of the crew should know where the first aid kit is at all times.

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**Advisor Question:** I've heard about the "turkey bag" method of preparing backpacking meals. Can you describe that and is it acceptable at Philmont?

**Answer:** The "turkey bag" method is a term applied to a variety of techniques where the ingredients of the meal are placed in a heavy-duty aluminum or plastic turkey bag, boiling water is added, and the meal allowed to re-hydrate before being served from the bag. While crews have used these and similar methods at Philmont in the past, Philmont became more proactive in discouraging them; the [The Guidebook To Adventure](#) now states "Philmont requires that crews DO NOT use this cooking method". Your Ranger will teach the method for "two-pot meal" described in the previous Watchu Gram. Among other issues, the turkey bag method generates additional trash that must be stored at staffed camps and then transported out of the back country. If your crew follows the instructions for the two-pot meal, particularly taking care to remove the pot from the stove to re-hydrate the meal before the food at the bottom of the pot sticks or burns, clean-up of the pot is not a difficult chore.

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**Phil Fact:** The Vermejo Park Club, organized in 1926 on the WS Ranch adjoining Philmont (and now part of Ted Turner's Vermejo Park Ranch), accepted only "men worth knowing" as members, including Cecil B. DeMille, Harvey Firestone, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford (?), Herbert Hoover, and Andrew Mellon. The club disbanded during the Great Depression.

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The pulse quickens. Do you see the mountains?

Cecil B. DeMille

Hollywood, California