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## Health and Safety on the Trail

Patriots' Path Council crews have a very good reputation for being prepared for their Philmont experience. One of the most important obligations you have as a crew advisor is to keep all members of the crew healthy and on the trail, to the best of your ability. So what do you need to know?

The "Big Four" reasons that most often cause crew members, Scouts or Advisors, to be sent back to base camp are:

1. **Dehydration** - all crew members must be CLEAR and COPIOUS at all times. Hydrate yourself and your crew now.
2. **Hypothermia** - all crew members must have rain suits. At first sign of rain, get it on and stay dry! When the storm passes, get it off.
3. **Falls** - no member of the crew climbs on anything without Philmont staff supervision. PERIOD.
4. **Unsanitary Dining** - sterilize all crew and personal eating utensils before and after each meal. Cooks MUST be clean. Whole crews have gone down from this one. It should not happen - use hand sanitizer. Philmont will issue a 6-ounce bottle of hand sanitizer and a 4" bottle of Camp Suds to each crew. It is a good idea to bring a small personal bottle of hand sanitizer for each crew member, or maybe a pair of individuals like tentmates). This goes a long way toward avoiding cleanliness problems.

Other common issues include:

**Nose Bleeds** are common, especially among the Scouts, less often for advisors. The elevation and the low relative humidity are usually the cause. This will be a minor event in a crew that knows nose bleed first aid. All crew members should know and refresh this important first aid skill. Remember, best policy is to have all crew members certified in first aid, either the required wilderness course or the standard one. Saline solution or KY Jelly (water-based, rather than oil-based Vaseline) are good protections against dryness.

**Elevation:** Exposure to high elevation can cause problems for crew members. Headaches are common. DRINK WATER at the first sign of a headache - this often takes care of the problem.

**Foot Care:** Blisters and other foot problems can make for some very bad days. Always wear two pairs of socks; a heavy outer sock, preferably wool, and a polypropylene inner sock to reduce friction and the probability of blisters. At the first sign of a problem, stop and address it immediately. It will save you time in the long run. The old standard, duct tape, often comes to the rescue when friction is causing the problem. After covering the hot-spot or blister with proper medication and medical covering, duct tape over the problem area does an excellent job of reducing friction.

**Hyperventilation:** It doesn't happen often but when it does it will also be a minor event if you know what to do. Keep a zip lock bag and a calm composure handy for the very few times you might encounter this one. Breathe into the bag. It's easy to beat if you know what to do.

Your *Guidebook to Adventure* has a good discussion of these and other health and safety topics. Have you re-read it? You will gain additional insights each time that you read it.

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**Health note about the Colorado Tour:** In addition to the activities you'll be enjoying, the two-day tour in Colorado is designed to give you time to get acclimated to elevation and low humidity. You will be at 6,000 feet for two days before arriving at Philmont, including some time above 14,000 feet on Pikes Peak. This usually is enough time for most to work out the bugs. If you don't feel well in Colorado, hang in there - by the time you get to Philmont you will probably be back to normal. Adequate hydration is essential - Drink! Drink! Drink! Are you clear and copious?

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**Medical insurance note:** For those WITHOUT medical insurance, the Philmont insurance becomes the primary carrier, and NO INSURANCE must be stated on the Philmont *Health and Medical Record*. For those WITH medical insurance, the Philmont insurance is secondary. A copy of your medical insurance card (front and back) must be attached to the medical form.

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**"Ten Essentials" for hikers:** *Philmont TREKS* has a list of ten items essential for hikers, nine of which match items on the list of ten "Basic Essentials" for Scouts. Having these "ten plus one essentials" readily available at all times on the trail is a health and safety issue. In particular, the crew's daypacks for sidehikes should include all eleven items.



1. **Map and Compass** - and the ability to read a map and use a compass.



2. **Sun and Insect Protection** - sunscreen, broad brimmed hat, sunglasses, insect repellent



3. **Water Bottles** - filled with disinfected water



4. **Rain Gear** - a breathable rain suit with jacket and pants



5. **First Aid Kit** - adequate to treat common injuries that may occur on a hike, and including gloves for protection from blood-born pathogens. The *Boy Scout Handbook* recommends a personal first aid kit include the following:

- \_\_\_ Adhesive bandages..... 6
- \_\_\_ Sterile gauze pads, 4-by-4-inch ..... 2
- \_\_\_ Adhesive tape ..... 1 small roll
- \_\_\_ Moleskin, 3-by-6-inch ..... 1
- \_\_\_ Soap or..... 1 small bar or
- \_\_\_ Alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel ..... 1 travel-sized bottle
- \_\_\_ Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin)..... 1 small tube
- \_\_\_ Scissors ..... 1 pair
- \_\_\_ Tweezers..... 1 pair
- \_\_\_ Disposable non-latex gloves ..... 1 pair
- \_\_\_ Mouth-barrier device for rescue breathing... 1
- \_\_\_ Pencil and paper ..... 1

Refer to *Philmont's Guidebook to Adventure* for a more extensive list of items that should be included in a crew first aid kit.



6. **Matches or Lighter**- for building a small campfire if necessary for warmth, drying clothing or boosting morale



7. **Extra Clothing** - daytime temperatures can drop to 40° F during the summer; nighttime temperatures can drop below freezing. Use layers to adjust to temperature changes



8 **Extra Food** - to provide energy and warmth



9. **Pocket Knife** - a Swiss army knife with several tools is recommended



10. **Watch** - so that you can stick to the schedule/itinerary



11. **Flashlight** - a small flashlight or a headlamp for when the sun goes down



Preparing for adventure in the Magic Mountains,

*Minor F. Huffman, Sr.*

Philmont General Manager and Director of Program, 1943 - 1946

Author of *High Adventure Among the Magic Mountains*