

# Safety Recommendations for Church Activities

You can find the basics of planning fun, uplifting, and safe activities in [section 13](#) of *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010) and in the First Presidency letter “[Safety in Church Activities](#).” Also visit the Church’s Safety and Health website at [safety.lds.org](http://safety.lds.org).

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## GENERAL SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL ACTIVITIES

When planning a Church activity, consider the following safety recommendations:

### 1. Purpose

- Identify the specific purpose for this activity (see *Handbook 2*, 13.1).

### 2. Activity

- Plan the activity, including safety considerations.
- Prepare to review the safety information needed for this event or activity with participants.

#### Additional Resource

- “[Safety through Planning and Relying on the Spirit](#)” (video), LDS.org

### 3. Participants

- Plan age-appropriate activities.
- All participants should have the necessary skills to participate safely.
- Consider the risk factors of individuals, including fitness level, medical issues, food allergies, or physical limitations.

#### Additional Resource

- “[Get in Shape](#)” (video), LDS.org

### 4. Permissions

- Inform parents of planned activities.
- If activities include an overnight stay or travel outside the local area, parents should complete and sign a [Permission and Medical Release Form](#).
- Complete an [Event and Activity Plan](#), and obtain bishopric (or stake presidency) approval for activities that include an overnight stay or travel outside the local area.
- If necessary, obtain a certificate of insurance for the facility, property, or location where the activity will occur.
- If necessary, secure the appropriate permits from private individuals or government entities.

### 5. Supervision

- The size of the group, the skill level of the participants, and the degree of challenge should be considered when determining the total number of adults needed to supervise the activity. Provide a minimum of two adults for each activity.

- Encourage use of the buddy system. Pair up youth to help them look out for each other.
- An individual adult must never be alone with an individual youth or child during an activity or the associated travel.
- Parents should be encouraged to help with supervision or transportation as needed.

### 6. Training, Certification, or Expertise

- If certain types of activities will take place at a distance from emergency services, consider whether individuals trained in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or advanced (wilderness) first aid need to accompany the group.
- Activities such as a challenge course, a zip line, whitewater rafting, climbing, rappelling, swimming, or shooting can present greater-than-average risks to participants. To minimize exposure to illness or injury during such activities, consider whether individuals with applicable training and certification or professional guides need to accompany the group.
- Activity venues, facilities, and equipment should meet standards set by nationally recognized associations or organizations that serve youth.

### 7. Travel

- Long-distance travel for activities is discouraged.
- When participants travel in private passenger vehicles, each person should have a seat belt and use it.
- Drivers should be licensed, responsible adults, and each vehicle should be covered by reasonable insurance.
- Drivers should not engage in distracting behavior while driving.

#### Additional Resources

- “[Drowsy Driver](#)” (video), LDS.org
- Videos on the [Distracted Driving](#) web page, LDS.org

## 8. Equipment Safety

- Provide and use the appropriate equipment for this activity—such as helmets, gloves, ropes, safety glasses, or personal floatation devices (PFDs).
- If power tools or equipment are used, base their use on the manufacturer’s recommendations and local or national regulations.

## 9. Emergency and Communication Plans

- Where appropriate, review emergency procedures with activity leaders, including how to respond if they

encounter severe weather or other emergencies typical for the area.

- If this activity is dependent on the weather, consider having a backup plan.
- Identify the contact information for the local emergency services near this activity (police, fire, nearest medical facility, or ambulance). Provide this information to activity leaders so that it is readily accessible.
- In areas of limited communication, consider how to contact emergency services.

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## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

*If the specific activity you are planning falls into one of the general categories listed below, consider the following additional safety procedures.*

### Camping, Backpacking, and Hiking

- If the group will camp or backpack in areas without reasonable access to emergency services, consider having someone trained in advanced (wilderness) first-aid skills accompany the group.
- If the activity will be held at an altitude higher than 8,000 feet above sea level, see the following additional resource on high-altitude illness.
- Review your emergency and communication plans, especially if going to remote areas.
- Remind participants to stay hydrated.
- If there are likely to be ticks in the area of the activity, review the following additional resource on tick bites.

#### Additional Resources

- [“High-Altitude Illness”](#) fact sheet
- [“Lightning Safety: An Interview with Sam Cloud”](#) (video), LDS.org
- [“Tick Bites”](#) fact sheet

### Cleaning

- If chemicals are to be used, review the safe use of cleaning products.
- Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations for the use of personal protective equipment when using cleaning products. Such equipment may include gloves, eye protection, and possibly N95 respirators.
- If cleaning a Church building, follow cleaning guidelines provided by the local facilities management group.

### Cooking

- Use caution when boiling water, cooking with oils, and working next to heat sources and open flames.

#### Additional Resources

- [“Food Safety”](#) fact sheet
- Food safety posters for [recreational camps](#) or [meetinghouse serving areas](#)

### Cycling

- When planning a cycling activity, first focus on safety training and equipment checks. At this time, discuss the proper use of a helmet, and perform a maintenance check for all bicycles that will be used on the ride. Also assess the riding skills of each participant.
- Then conduct the actual ride. If the participants are inexperienced, consider conducting the ride in an area of relative safety, such as a bike trail or low-traffic road, and during daylight hours and in good weather. Monitor the participants’ behaviors and ensure that their equipment is appropriate.

#### Additional Resources

- [Bicycle Safety: Tips for Parents, Guardians, and Kids](#), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- [Bike Basics: The AAA Guide to a Great Ride](#), AAA Traffic Safety Advocacy
- [“BSA Bike Safety Guidelines,”](#) Boy Scouts of America
- [“Lightning Safety: An Interview with Sam Cloud”](#) (video), LDS.org

### Emergency Preparedness

#### Additional Resources

- [“Severe Weather Planning”](#) fact sheet
- [“Pandemic Planning: Home and Family Preparedness”](#) fact sheet
- [“Disaster Cleanup Guidelines”](#) fact sheet
- [“Floodwater Facts for Volunteers”](#) fact sheet

## First Aid

- Teach the following key principles of first aid:
  - Call emergency medical assistance first (911 in the United States).
  - Don't enter hazardous situations to offer first aid.
  - Don't perform first aid above your ability level.
  - Use gloves and other barriers to minimize the chance of contacting another person's blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids. All such fluids can contain disease-causing pathogens.

## Geocaching

- When necessary, encourage participants to use sunblock and mosquito repellent.
- Bring plenty of water, and take frequent breaks to hydrate all participants.
- If the activity will be held at an altitude higher than 8,000 feet above sea level, review the following additional resource on high-altitude sickness.

### Additional Resource

- ["High-Altitude Illness"](#) fact sheet

## Home Maintenance

- Plan the activity so that youth are not exposed to the following:
  - Live electrical energy
  - Falls beyond three to four feet
  - Unprotected machinery or equipment
  - Hazardous substances, such as harmful chemicals, lead paint, or asbestos
- Dress appropriately for the activity. Do not wear loose-fitting clothing, jewelry, or open-toed shoes.
- Ensure that the youth safely use proper equipment:
  - Use tools that can safely be handled by the group (see number 8 under "General Safety Recommendations for All Activities").
  - If ladders will be needed, provide a ladder-safety orientation. Working at heights greater than three to four feet is discouraged for youth.

### Additional Resources

- ["Home Repair Hazards: Staying Safe While You Work,"](#) University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
- ["Home-Repair Safety Tips,"](#) HowStuffWorks
- ["Basic Ladder Safety,"](#) American Ladder Institute

## Home Painting

- Paints, stains, and other solvents can be toxic. Make sure to use chemicals that will be less toxic to minimize adverse health reactions. Warn participants who are sensitive to the chemicals being used.
- Review prescribed recommendations given on paint labels for using personal protective equipment—gloves to prevent skin contact, eye protection, and possibly N95 respirators.
- If possible, plan the painting activity so that participants can work at ground level and not at heights that would expose them to significant falls. If ladders will be needed, provide a ladder-safety orientation. Working at heights greater than three to four feet is discouraged for youth.

### Additional Resources

- ["Safe Home Painting: A Primer,"](#) Everyday Health
- ["Basic Ladder Safety,"](#) American Ladder Institute

## Running

- Remember to take breaks to hydrate all participants.
- Whenever possible, use paths that are off the road and away from vehicles.
- Obey all traffic laws.

### Additional Resource

- ["Heat Illness Prevention"](#) fact sheet

## Service Projects

- The service should be conducted with the consent and oversight of the property owner.
- Use basic personal protective equipment as the tasks require, such as appropriate footwear (rubber boots for wet areas, hard soles for sharp objects, above-ankle support for uneven surfaces), work gloves, safety glasses, and head and hearing protection. Use insect repellent in mosquito-infested areas. Use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
- Only trained and experienced operators should use power equipment. Youth should not operate chain saws. If youth are assigned to assist workers using power equipment, they should have the appropriate personal protective equipment and should maintain a safe distance from the immediate work area.
- Avoid becoming overheated or dehydrated. Drink plenty of water, and rest when needed. Be aware of contaminated water.
- During wet or cold conditions, dress appropriately. When working in wet conditions, wear waterproof boots to prevent trench foot.
- Avoid contact with hazardous chemicals, power lines, energized electrical circuits, and stray or wild animals.

- Be aware of motorized traffic in the area at all times. When walking or working in areas where motor vehicles are present, walk facing oncoming traffic. Wear bright or reflective clothing if possible.
- Participants should not work in, on, or around condemned or failing structures or buildings.
- Participants should not work in any excavations greater than four feet in depth, such as trenches for plumbing, wells, or building foundations.
- Participants should not work on roofs. If ladders will be needed, provide a ladder-safety orientation. Working at heights greater than three to four feet is discouraged for youth.

#### **Additional Resources**

- [“Floodwater Facts for Volunteers”](#) fact sheet
- [“Disaster Cleanup Guidelines”](#) fact sheet
- [“Heat Illness Prevention”](#) fact sheet
- [“Emergency Response Volunteer Training”](#) (video), LDS.org
- [“Basic Ladder Safety,”](#) American Ladder Institute

#### **Sports, Games, and Exercise**

- Remember to take breaks to discuss progress and review rules and any safety concerns.
- Remind participants to stay hydrated.
- If the sport involves the possibility of any physical contact, such as soccer or basketball, review the following additional resource on concussion.

#### **Additional Resources**

- [“Concussion”](#) fact sheet
- [“Heat Illness Prevention”](#) fact sheet

#### **Water-Related Activities and Sports**

- Review these basic tips for safe swimming:
  - Use the buddy system.
  - Check the skill level of participants.
  - Have qualified supervision.
  - Check that the area is safe for swimming or that lifeguards are present.
  - Know the risks of elevated entry, and inspect the area before diving.
  - Use personal floatation devices (PFDs) or life jackets as needed.
  - Encourage participants to learn to swim.

- Be aware of the potential risks of open water (cold, hypothermia, and cramps).
- Encourage participants to be in shape before they go.
- Explain that if someone is struggling in the water, throw a lifeline if possible; don't swim out to the swimmer.
- Be attentive to the weather while on the water.

#### **Additional Resource**

- [“Swimming Safely”](#) (video), LDS.org

#### **Woodworking**

- Wear the proper personal protective equipment, such as eye, hearing, hand, or foot protection.
- Dress appropriately—no loose clothing, hair, or jewelry.
- Avoid any distractions.
- Know how to properly use tools and equipment.
- If power tools or equipment are used, base their use on manufacturer's recommendations and local or national regulations.
- Make adjustments to machinery only when the power is off.
- Keep the work area clean and organized.

**Note:** Some of the resources referred to in this document are not created, maintained, or controlled by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but are provided as additional resources.