

## Winter Camping

1. Clothing: For cold weather, we normally wear underclothes, insulating long underwear, pants and shirt, and an outer layer of windproof/waterproof clothing. This includes a hat and gloves or mittens. For extremely cold weather, another layer of insulating fleece or wool can be added, along with a heavy parka. You stay warm in winter by trapping air between multiple layers of clothing. If it is dry outside, you may not need the outer waterproof layer. Wear layers so that as you get hot, you can remove a layer to maintain your body temperature and avoid overheating. Wool and manmade fabrics provide the best insulating value because they do not absorb water and retain some insulating characteristics even when they do get wet. Cotton will retain water for long periods of time, and may never dry in cold weather. This includes cotton t-shirts, sweatshirts, and especially jeans. It is vital to keep your hands warm (so that you can use them), and to keep your head covered. 50% of your body heat can be lost through the head, and up to 80% can be lost through the head and neck, so wear a warm hat and bring a scarf. Make sure that your gloves are waterproof for when you are working or playing with your hands in snow. A reasonable alternative to expensive waterproof gloves/mittens is to buy a large pair of dishwashing gloves to wear over wool gloves when building snow shelters or having snowball fights. Good waterproof boots are a must. These can be rubber overboots, felt-lined boots, gore-tex or similar material or treated leather boots. Good clothing may be found at thrift stores, surplus stores, and a variety of outfitters in the area. There are also numerous on-line outfitters that are available. See next page for additional discussion.

Remember the golden rules of winter survival:

Layer your clothing

Stay dry

Better to be a little bit cool than hot and sweaty

**COTTON KILLS!**

2. Sleeping: See next page for additional info on sleeping bags. Your bed works just like your clothes – layer it to keep warm. Start with a waterproof ground cloth, then your insulating pad or pads. These should be full-length, closed-cell foam or thermarest type. Two are often better than one – remember that you will be sleeping on snow! You will lose about 75% of your body heat DOWN to the surface below you, and only about 25% UP to the air – so plan accordingly. DO NOT use any type of waterproof sleeping bag cover – this will trap moisture vapor from your body inside the cover, get your sleeping bag wet, and make you cold and miserable. Your sleeping clothes should be clean and dry. NEVER wear the same clothes that you have been in all day to sleep. Change into something new, clean and dry. This should be a sweatsuit, a new pair of long underwear, pajamas, or something similar. Wear socks to keep your feet warm – probably heavier than you would wear during the day. Your feet are at the far end of the sleeping bag – and will be the first things to get cold.

3. Tents/shelters: If it is windy, be prepared to use "dead men" anchors in the snow, rather than regular tent pegs. Make sure that your tent will support snow on top of it, or be prepared to regularly wake up during the night and "flap" the tent to knock snow off. There are numerous types of snow shelters. These include:

- a. Covered trench – very easy to make. Dig down to bare earth (in shallow snow), or about two feet in deep snow, a little wider than your pad and sleeping bag. Pile snow around the trench, and cover it with a tarp supported by poles, skis, sticks, etc.
- b. Cut and cover – in firm snow, cut blocks. When the blocks are removed, a trench is created. Stack the blocks around the edge of the trench. Cover with a tarp as above, or cut blocks large enough to build a slanted, peaked roof.
- c. Snow caves take a lot of work. You can either dig into a hill or snow bank, or create your own by piling up snow then digging into it to hollow it out. You can get very wet building this. Make sure that walls are at least 18 inches thick, that there are two exits, and that there are several air holes/vents.
- d. Igloos are fun, but take special tools and practice to cut the blocks the right size and shape, stack them properly, and close the top. Make sure that walls are at least 18 inches thick, that there are two exits, and that there are several air holes/vents. You can make tools from cookie sheets, an old carpenter's saw, or long aluminum knives like machetes with serrated edges. The most common mistake in building igloos is failing to start curving the walls in – you end up with walls eight feet high, and no way to close the igloo!

#### 4. Sleeping Bags:

- Your sleeping bag should be rated to zero (0) degrees Fahrenheit or colder. Bring at least one sleeping pad. Two is a good idea. If your sleeping bag isn't rated that cold, bring one or two warm blankets to use with it. A fleece "slumber bag" makes a good, inexpensive liner. You can also put one sleeping bag inside of another if neither is "warm enough". Down sleeping bags are usually considered to be "the warmest", but they are very expensive, and become useless when wet. A better idea for most scouts is a bag that uses a man-made insulating fill. Look for a good zipper, with an insulated tube running the length of the zipper that will help keep out drafts. A bag with a hood and drawstring that can be closed to reduce heat loss is best, but a good alternative is for the sleeper to wear an insulating hat of some type while in bed.
- Make sure that you have a separate set of clean, dry clothes to wear to bed – a sweat suit or long underwear, or something similar, including socks.
- Bring a waterproof (plastic) ground cloth to put under your sleeping bag.
- All clothing should be wool or manmade (capilene, propylene, fleece, nylon, or similar). Don't bring cotton – especially jeans or sweatpants.

Comments on clothing:

Wear:

Underwear and socks, preferably not cotton

Long underwear, wool or artificial fabric, no cotton!

Outer pants and shirt – artificial material or wool. No blue jeans or cotton sweatpants!

Overpants – waterproof, or ski pants.

Waterproof jacket, if needed.

Boots, waterproof or rubber

Gloves or mittens (waterproof)

A hat that covers your ears (watch cap, ski mask, Floyd R. Turbo hat, etc.)

Gaiters or rubber bands to close the bottom of your pants legs, unless your overpants take care of that.

Have available for when needed:

Heavy parka (used when you're not very active and at night)

Socks, and more socks

Long underwear, at least one extra pair of tops and bottoms. No cotton – only man made fabrics or wool.

At least one change of dry underwear

At least one extra change of long pants: wool or blend (no blue jeans or cotton sweatpants!)

At least one extra long sleeve shirt (wool or fleece is okay, but not cotton)

A wool or blended fabric sweater

A brimmed hat in case it's sunny but not cold

At least one extra pair of gloves or mittens (waterproof)

Several plastic bags – pack your dry clothes in some, and have some to put wet clothes into.

Sun screen (lots), & lip balm

Sunglasses or tinted goggles to protect you from the sun

Scarf

Normal Camping Equipment:

Bowl, cup, spoon, fork

Flashlight

Sunblock

Sunglasses

Plastic bags to put wet clothes into

Water bottles/camelback/platypus – drink lots during the day

Day pack or fanny pack to keep your stuff in during the day – spare gloves, sunblock, water, etc.

Pack into a duffel bag or something similar – it's better than a backpack for this trip.