



Activity Permitted for: See *Specific Project Guidelines* below.

About Community Clean-Ups

Community clean-ups can include Adopt-A-Highway programs, beach or river clean-ups, and park or natural area clean-ups. They may be organized by the troop or be part of a community-wide service project. While doing this type of community service, you must be aware of the hazards and educate everyone involved.

Community Clean-Ups: General Guidelines

- Always check to see if permission is required from the property owner or government agency.
- Hard-sole, closed-toe, and closed-heel shoes are required.
- If clean-up is done in an area of vegetation higher than your shoes, long pants and long-sleeved shirts are required to protect against insects, hazardous plants, vegetation, etc.
- Adult watchers should have a communication plan using two-way radios or cell phones.
- All adult watchers must carry an emergency warning device, air horn, or whistle.
- An Emergency Action Plan must be created for the event to include communication plans, and all participants should practice the plan before the clean-up.
- Clean-ups are planned during daylight hours, never at night. Light-reflective gear is helpful even during daylight hours, particularly on overcast days.
- Clean-up projects require additional information, which is included on permission forms. Parents/guardians must give expressed permission for the event after having received specific instructions, including information on the location and environmental conditions.
- In the case of roadway clean-ups, the permission slip must also include how close to the roadway the group will be working (for example, they will work no closer than within 10 feet of the roadway's shoulder) as well as the time duration.

Specific Project Guidelines

Beach Clean-Up (Daisies and above)

- Do not enter water deeper than 6 inches without an adult trained in American Red Cross [Water Safety for Parents and Caregivers](#) or equivalent experience, or a lifeguard, present.
- Hard-sole, closed-toe, and closed-heel water shoes may be used in place of regular shoes.

Public Parks, Community Clean-Ups (Daisies and above)

- Call ahead to determine if any permissions or specific permits are necessary.
- Ensure the safety of the grounds and security of the area by choosing a location that is in a public space with ample human activity (not remote).
- Do not enter any bodies of water such as lakes or large ponds without a lifeguard present. See the [Safety Activity Checkpoints for Swimming](#).

River or Waterway Clean-Ups (Brownies and above)

- Do not enter the water on rivers or waterways due to potential unstable bank conditions without a lifeguard present. See the [Safety Activity Checkpoints for Swimming](#).
- Stay away from swift moving water.

Highway/Road Clean-Ups (Cadettes and above)

- Speed limits of the road where the clean-up is taking place cannot exceed 40 mph. Participants cannot work in or around high-risk areas such as bridges, overpasses, medians, roundabouts, and steep slopes.
- Contact the owner or government agency (such as the State Department of Transportation) for permission. Many states and local governments have specific guidelines and safety rules to follow. Some states have safety videos for highway cleanups.
- All participants should work facing traffic.
- All participants must wear bright clothing or light-reflective gear.
- Stay away from rural and winding two-lane roads and highways.
- Adult watchers are safety observers at the event. They do not participate in cleaning the area; they observe the roadway and participants to identify hazards and activate emergency warnings to avoid danger.
- An adult watcher should stand ahead of the group facing traffic to flag cars to slow down. At least one adult watcher should be at the front and one at the back of the group. If the two adult watchers cannot keep each other in sight, additional adult watchers are required. Use of air horns should be considered to activate an emergency response.
- Adult watchers must carry an air horn as an emergency warning device.
- Use cones or large, bright signs to indicate a clean-up in progress.

Learn More

- **Adopt-A-Highway: Contact your state's Department of Transportation.** Many have safety tips, rules and regulations, or videos. If your state does not have specific laws concerning adopt-a-highway and community clean-ups, reference another state. For example, [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Adopt-a-Highway Safety](#).
- **Understand that waste products on the side of the road and in parks have the potential to be hazardous or poisonous.** Research what those may be. For an overview of safety guidelines, including hazardous materials, view this [Michigan Department of Transportation video](#).

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities. Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Ensure state laws that are specific to children with special needs are adhered to. For example, the visual or hearing impaired may require very specific laws or guidelines. For more information, visit [Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Service Days and Events](#).

Equity. Consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity. See the Equity section of the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for general advice about expense,

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) in advance; review it so all are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury, missing person, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

The emergency action plan should include:

- Communication plans.
- Adult-to-youth ratios apply for the number of participants.
- Required adult watchers are not included in the adult/girl ratio.
- Air horns are required for use as an emergency warning device on roadways.
- Whistles or air horns may be used as emergency warning devices on beaches, parks, waterways, and other areas, not including roadways.

- All should know how to respond to an emergency warning device.

First Aid: All Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED. If cleaning up around waterways, one adult must also be certified in Wilderness and Remote First Aid, Wilderness First Responder, or lifeguard.

Community Clean-Up Checkpoints

Girl Scouts should plan the activity. Encourage them to plan the location, their desired outcome, safety precautions, and how to deal with problems that may arise during the clean-up, such as:

- Traffic
- Public interference
- Stress from hot or cold weather
- UV radiation
- Severe weather
- Dangerous animals (snakes, foxes, alligators, jellyfish, etc.) depending on the area you will be working in
- Stinging/biting insects
- Poisonous/toxic plants—poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, wild parsnip
- Where collected trash will be discarded; arrangements or permissions may be required

Be sure participants have a good understanding of potentially hazardous waste they should not touch or pick up. Discuss this with them. Explain that if they see something, they should say something to an adult. The checklist below provides examples of hazardous or dangerous materials:

- Abandoned barrels
- Antifreeze
- Any container with a RADIOACTIVE label
- Any container with liquid, including soda bottles
- Broken automotive batteries
- Bulging or dented containers
- Chemical containers
- Containers leaking an unknown substance
- Containers of unidentifiable materials
- Dead animals, sea creatures
- Gas cans
- Hypodermic needles
- Unidentified liquids, powders, chemicals
- Narcotics
- Paint cans
- Pesticide/herbicide containers
- Propane or other fuel canisters
- Sharp objects
- Unidentifiable containers
- Used oil
- Weapons

Prompt Girl Scouts to share resources. Encourage them to create a list of safety gear and supplies, and to determine which resources can be shared.

Choose an appropriate area. Consider terrain, safety, and public access when choosing a location to clean up. Work with local community groups that may offer clean-up days as part of a larger community beautification project. Locations are restricted to a reasonable length as determined by age, nature of the terrain, physical

condition of the participants, disabilities, weather conditions, and time of day. The location should always accommodate everyone interested.

Assess safety of the clean-up area. Safety is of utmost concern during a clean-up. Be aware of the members of the public participants may encounter when cleaning up, traffic, and the potential hazards listed above. Consider extra safety precautions for areas where driver vision is restricted, such as curves in roads. Avoid areas with steep drop-offs. Do not work or stand within 10 feet of the shoulder of the road. Follow all state Adopt-a-Highway safety rules when working along any roadsides. Ensure that the DOT (Department of Transportation) or a land management or similar agency is contacted during the planning stage to determine any restricted areas or if any permits are needed. First aider is required. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first aider with Wilderness First Aid certification.

Ensure adults have a comprehensive understanding of the trip. Group members are trained to be observant of the area, surroundings, and fatigue of individuals. Instruction is given on safety rules, such as staying together in a group; recognizing poisonous plants, biting or stinging insects, and ticks; respecting wild animals; and behaving effectively in emergencies. Ensure that Girl Scouts, based on their level, know the safety precautions.

Permission Slips. Clean-up projects require additional information included on permission slips. Parents/guardians must give express permission for the event, including specific instructions on the location and environmental conditions. In the case of roadway clean-ups, the permission slip must also include how close to the roadway the group will be working (for example, youth will work no closer than within 10 feet of the roadway's shoulder).

Safety Gear. The gear you will need will depend on the clean-up project, location, and weather.

- A water bottle or hydration pack with enough water for each person, for the length of the clean-up
- Face mask
- Sturdy footwear
- Sturdy gloves
- Safety vests
- Bright clothing
- Garbage bags
- Tongs (pick-up tool)
- A working cell phone held by designated adult in case of emergencies.
- First aid kit

Additional Safety Gear: Roads and Highways

- Safety cones or triangles to warn drivers of workers along the road or highway
- Red flags for adult watchers at front and back of the group
- Air horn for each adult watcher