



Sledding and Tobogganing

Council Approval: May Be Required

Certificate of Insurance (COI): Required from vendor providing this activity for Council Approval. Visit GSNI's webpage for information on requesting a COI from the venue.

If participating in this activity as part of a trip, troops must complete the [GSNI Troop Trip Travel Request Form](#).

Activity Permitted for: D B J C S A

Includes: Snow tubing

About Sledding and Tobogganing

The history of sledding is quite interesting. Traditionally, sleds were used to transport goods and people in places where wheels could not operate. Toboggans, made of poles tied together with leather, were used by Indigenous people across North America to carry food, clothing, and other items across snow. The Inuit people made the first toboggans out of whale bone or wood strips. The word "toboggan" comes from the word *tobakun*. This means "sled" in the language of the Mi'kmaq people, who are indigenous to Canada.

Today, people of all ages enjoy sledding, tobogganing, and tubing as an enjoyable outdoor winter activity and sport. Tobogganing has even grown to be a formal sport in the Winter Olympics.

Sleds and toboggans will vary in design, shape, and material and can range from round plastic discs to rectangular wood structures with metal runners. A toboggan is typically a long, flat-bottomed sled made of thin boards that curve upward in a C-shape at one end. Snow tubes are inflatable, doughnut-shaped, rubber or plastic inner tubes, similar to those used in water tubing, but with dimpled centers.

Stick to designated sledding, tobogganing, and snow-tubing hills away from roads or heavily wooded areas to enjoy sledding safely. Girl Scouts should also receive basic instruction in sledding safety and conduct rules and learn to perform basic steering skills, including how to slow down and stop. Members are never to be towed behind a motor vehicle, including a snowmobile.

Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. In addition, some ski resorts will offer snow-tubing and tobogganing classes within specially designated areas, so check with your local ski resorts if you have any nearby.

Learn More

- Competitive and Olympic sledding: [Team USA](#)
- [Tips on sledding](#) from the National Safety Council

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities. Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location and/or the instructor in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. For more information, visit [Move United](#).

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) before starting any activity and 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.

Sledding and Tobogganing Checkpoints

Select a safe site. Ensure sledding takes place in a safe spot, away from roads and free of vehicles. The site should have no obstructions such as rocks, poles, benches, trees, or signposts. The nature of the terrain, potential hazards (such as an avalanche or frozen lake), mileage, and approximate activity time should be known to all group members in advance. Avoid sledding near streets or highways.

Make smart decisions. Slide downhill feet first (like Olympians) to reduce the potential for head injuries from collisions. Use of helmets for sledding is strongly recommended.

Do not permit towing. Girl Scout members are not permitted to be towed on sleds, toboggans, or tubes behind a motor vehicle of any kind, including snowmobiles.

Get a weather report. On the morning of the activity, check [Weather.com](https://www.weather.com) or other reliable weather sources to determine if conditions are appropriate. If weather conditions prevent the activity, be prepared with a backup plan or alternative activity, or postpone the activity. Write, review, and practice evacuation and emergency plans for severe weather with the group.

Practice safe sledding, tobogganing, and snow tubing. Conditions should be monitored, and breaks taken to prevent hypothermia and frostbite. Girl Scouts and adults must agree on the portion of slope to be used for sledding and the portion to be used for walking uphill.

Prepare for emergencies. Ensure the presence of a waterproof first aid kit. Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED, who is prepared for cases of frostbite, cold exposure, hypothermia, and altitude sickness. 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.

Safety and Recommended Gear

- Hat, mittens, or warm gloves
- Waterproof winter boots
- Bicycle or ski helmets (may be required by some organized sledding facilities)
- Heavy, wool insulating socks (avoid cotton socks)
- Layered clothing
- Thermal underwear or long underwear
- Snow pants, snowsuit, or waterproof pants over warm layers