

A Brief Description of the "Klondike Derby"

Armed with map and compass, gear-filled sledge and Scout outdoor knowledge, three dozen or more Patrols composed of four to eight Scouts will make their way over snow-covered trails to several "Klondikaven" cities and towns to test their skills in fire-building, ice rescue, winter first aid, sledge racing, emergency shelter building, orienteering and cooking. Along the way they will be quizzed on their camping and first aid knowledge by bands of "Renegades". At noon Patrols will build wood fires, prepare hot lunches and rest for a spell. Scouts will spend three to five hours on the Derby Trail fighting fatigue and cold, wet conditions to prove they have the Right Scout Stuff to hike two to three miles safely and comfortably on a cold winter day.

Orienteering Hiking in the winter is particularly tough because trails are hidden beneath the snow. Above timberline, strong winds can easily blow the snow into a blizzard situation of zero visibility: Whiteout! Scouts will demonstrate their ability to use a map and compass to find their way off a mountain to a more sheltered and safe position.

Winter First Aid Injuries in the winter woods are much more difficult to deal with than in the summer. A person immobilized by an injury cools off rapidly; hypothermia and shock complicate winter emergencies. Patrols will be confronted with a very realistic emergency situation and they will demonstrate their skills to deal with it, including transporting the patient out of the woods using their patrol sledge.

Emergency Shelter Building Weather conditions turned sour, injuries, getting lost, or other unanticipated delays may require that the Patrol spend the night in the woods. Using tarps, twine and insulation they have with them and collected natural materials, Patrols will construct an shelter capable of protecting them from the cold, wind and precipitation.

Firebuilding Building a fire in the summer is a cinch, but in the winter it can be a tough challenge. Using only natural materials found in the area, Patrols will build fires and heat a cup of water to boiling to demonstrate their ability to quickly care for a fellow Scout who has become chilled and is in need of some external warmth and a hot drink.

Sledge Race Physical fitness, endurance and teamwork are important Patrol attributes on a winter hike. The sledge race measures the Patrol's ability to run at top speed for two to three minutes and tests the design and strength of the sledge they have constructed. It is tempting to go all out and work up a sweat, but the smart Patrol knows how to control body temperatures and prevent chills and hypothermia later in the day.

Ice Rescue It is tempting to leave the winding, twisting, up-and-down trail through the woods and hike over snow- and ice-covered streams, ponds and lakes. Scouts know that great care must be taken to avoid thin ice at inlets and outlets and other areas where water runs faster. But when the unexpected happens, Scouts know what to do. At this station, Patrols will demonstrate their skills in ice rescue techniques and in post-rescue first aid for immersion hypothermia.

Clothing Check At the Starting Line, each Scout in the Patrol will be carefully checked for adequate clothing. Even if just one Scout is found to be poorly prepared for the weather conditions, the Patrol is not allowed to start out on the Derby Trail until the ill-prepared Patrol member is properly clothed for the day. The "weak link theory" is in effect here: The Patrol is only as strong as its most ill-prepared Scout. 'Tis better to turn back and hike another day than to risk the health and safety of the Patrol. Checks for cold or wet Scouts are also conducted at each of the Derby skill stations and, when discovered, these Scouts are immediately escorted to one of the Warming Huts.

Trail Lunch Preparation After a couple hours on the Derby Trail, all Patrols stop, build a fire and prepare a hot lunch for each Scout. "Keep warm, dry, well-fed and hydrated" is a cardinal rule of winter hiking and camping. Lunchtime is a time to relax and reflect on the morning's Klondike Derby activities and to re-fuel with complex carbohydrates and a warm beverage in preparation for a busy and challenging afternoon.

Someday, somewhere one of our Scouts will save his own life or the lives of others using the leadership and winter survival skills we have helped him to develop through preparation for and participation in this annual high adventure challenge