

**10.7.1 – ALPINE ACTIVITIES – CHIEF COMMISSIONER’S
DIRECTIVE & STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

Acknowledgements

Nil

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1 Purpose

Alpine activities are an important and popular part of Scouts ACT. Scouts ACT is fortunate in having easy access to alpine areas both within the Australian Capital Territory and in New South Wales with the Victorian high country also accessible. Alpine activities are in the Outdoor Adventure Skills (OAS) so form an important area of activity for youth members.

While alpine activities can be highly suitable for youth members of all ages and present diverse skill development opportunities, there are material risks due to low temperatures, wet weather and high winds that require good risk management and activity planning.

2 Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides direction on alpine activities by members of Scouts ACT during Scouting activities. It should be read in conjunction with Scouts ACT Policy 10.7.

The following alpine activities are covered by this SOP:

- Snowplay
- Cross-Country or Nordic Skiing (including Skating)
- Snowshoeing
- Downhill Skiing
- Downhill Snowboarding.

This SOP does not cover activities such as mountaineering, ice-climbing or similar higher risk-high skills activities that are not part of the OAS. For further advice on these activities, contact the Adventurous Activities Commissioner (aa@scoutsact.com.au).

The higher-level Scouts ACT Policy for outdoor activities, including alpine, can be found in the Policy and Procedures Section of this website (<https://www.scoutsact.com.au/policies-and-procedures.html>), with policies 10.1 to 10.11 being particularly relevant. At a more operational level, the Guidance Notes at <https://www.scoutsact.com.au/auth/aa---guidance-notes.html>, risk management plans at <https://www.scoutsact.com.au/auth/aa---risk-managemnt-plans.html>, and the National Adventurous Activities Framework (NAAF) at <https://www.scoutsact.com.au/auth/aa---training.html> provide further guidance.

You can also ask for help by emailing the Adventurous Activities Commissioner: aa@scoutsact.com.au.

Note: Within Scouts ACT, SOPs are co-named as Chief Commissioner's Directives. This administrative arrangement supports an appropriate delegation and approval process for such documents.

3 Definitions

Alpine:	an area of mountainous or high country in which significant snow or blizzard conditions exist or can be reasonably expected to exist any time of the year. Generally, this is likely to be the case in the ACT, NSW and Victoria at altitudes of more than 1200 metres in winter (June-October) and 1500 metres in summer (November-May).
Leader	a person holding a Certificate of Adult Appointment who is willing and able to be responsible for alpine activities during a Scouts ACT activity.
Scout Appointed Guide	a person holding a Certificate of Adult Appointment and a Guide or Instructor appointment at the level appropriate for the alpine activity.

Ski Resort an area, often within a national park, managed by a commercial operator providing a range of services that can include ski patrols that may assist users in the resort. The Snowsafe website <http://snowsafe.org.au/snow-resorts/> has a useful list of resorts and other information.

4 Approved methods

The following alpine activities may be undertaken by members of Scouts ACT:

- **Snowplay:** activities in the snow including building snowmen (and women), snowball play, short on-snow hikes of a kilometre or so, and building simple shelters. OAS Alpine Stages 1 and 2 are within this class of activities. Snowplay activities will often be undertaken within or near a ski resort area.
 - Tobogganing is banned at some ski resorts and has risks that increase with the length and steepness of the slope and snow conditions. Tobogganing is not banned but Leaders are cautioned to ensure the activity can be conducted safely given the circumstances on the day and that it is a permissible activity at the location concerned.
- **Cross-Country or Nordic Skiing (including Skating)** on either formed trails associated with a ski resort or back country touring away from a resort area.
- **Snowshoeing** on either formed trails associated with a ski resort or back country touring away from a resort area.
- **Downhill Skiing** normally within a ski resort; when back country downhill skiing is undertaken, the same planning and management of risk applying to back country cross-country skiing is to be used.
- **Downhill Snowboarding** normally within a ski resort

Other activities in alpine areas such as bushwalking or vertical activities must comply with the SOP for those activities.

5 Procedure outline

Scouts ACT parties conducting activities in alpine areas will comply with the following:

- The Leader will obtain approval for the activity using the Adventurous Activities approval form. This must include an itinerary and names of participants with a person who is responsible to contact relevant authorities in the event the party is overdue; as required by the Policy Statement 10.1 - Approval of Activities.
- The Leader must ensure the youth members are adequately prepared and equipped for the intended activity and, particularly for the younger sections, have alternatives available for youth members who find they are not able to continue with the activity.
- The minimum party size for the safety of youth members is five.
- Where required (see Competencies section below), a Scout Appointed Guide is a part of the activity. In most instances for activities outside of a ski resort area, the Guide must be present.

- Other than activities conducted on a ski resort, the party will include a person with a recognised First Aid qualification; who will carry a first aid kit, and a competent navigator; who will carry a map of the area and, if the activity is outside of a ski resort, a Personal Locator Beacon (SPOT Beacons may be carried but do not replace the need for a PLB). CB radios may be useful on many activities.
- Each individual will carry a raincoat with a hood made of a waterproof/breathable fabric, and warm wear including a beanie (or similar), gloves, a jumper (preferably woollen, fleece, or equivalent), overpants that are showerproof as a minimum, and suitable footwear. The layering principle of clothing is recommended.
- Each individual will use appropriate sun protection measures. For activities below the snow line, a hat and sun screen are essential. For on-snow activities, a hat, sun glasses or goggles and sun screen are essential.

Scouts ACT parties conducting overnight activities in alpine areas will meet the following additional criteria:

- The party will carry tents for all of its members. Reliance on huts or snow shelters of any kind is unacceptable.
- The party will carry fuel stoves for all of their cooking. Use of wood fires in alpine areas (except in established fire-places in huts or picnic areas) is unacceptable.
- A Scout Appointed Guide is to be present for the activity.

Scouts ACT parties conducting extended tours in alpine areas, in addition to meeting the criteria above, must ensure the party is self-reliant. Extra food, pole repair sleeves, stove parts, ski tips, etc (as appropriate) should be carried.

The Alpine Responsibility Code provides a good guide for Scouts ACT members undertaking on-resort activities: <http://snowsafe.org.au/alpine-responsibility-code/>. A copy is attached at the end of this SOP.

6 Competencies and Approvals

The following competencies/qualifications apply to alpine activities:

- Snowplay: the Leader must hold a Certificate of Adult Appointment. It is desirable that a member of the party holds a first aid certificate.
- Downhill skiing and snowboard activities, when conducted on a ski resort, the Leader must hold a Certificate of Adult Appointment. It is desirable that a member of the party holds a first aid certificate.

- Cross-country skiing, back-country skiing, and snowshoeing activities (day or overnight) require the Leader to hold a Certificate of Adult Appointment, and the Leader or other adult to be a Scout Appointed Guide for the activity concerned. In some instances, a Subject Matter Expert with qualifications equivalent to the Guide appointment may be acceptable. To remove uncertainty, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on the trails in the vicinity of ski resorts require a Scout Appointed Guide/Subject Matter Expert. A member of the party must hold a first aid certificate and, for overnight touring in remote areas, it is desirable that a member of the party holds the Wilderness First Aid skill set.

The Adventurous Activities approval process must be used for alpine activities.

Participants may be excluded or removed from an activity (or an activity may be modified) at any time prior to departure at the Leader's discretion. This may also be done during the activity if safe to do so.

Participants may be excluded for reasons that include (but are not limited to) being under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs which may affect performance), being unable or unwilling to follow instructions, lacking suitable equipment, having an inadequate level of fitness, physical ability and experience for the particular activity.

Limitations of Section participation in Alpine Activities:

Joey Scouts – No Overnight expeditions

Cub Scouts – No Overnight expeditions

Scouts – No Restrictions

Venturer Scouts - No Restrictions

Rover Scouts - No Restrictions

Adventurous Activities Leaders – No Restrictions

7 Pre Activity Briefing

Pre-activity briefings are the responsibility of the Leader, in consultation with the Scout Appointed Guide, where one is required. It is essential that all information is accurately disseminated to potential participants in adequate time for an informed decision to be made about their participation.

The briefing should be delivered in a way that ensures that all participants are aware of the following, as appropriate:

- Identity and role of Guide(s)
- An outline of the activity plan and objectives
- The nature of the activity and its inherent risks
- Essential equipment and clothing
- Correct use and/or fit of equipment
- Cost

- The food and water required and the availability of water
- Conservation arrangements including protection of flora and fauna, rubbish removal and sanitation
- A summary of the emergency plan or sufficient information to allow participants to act appropriately in the event of an incident or emergency, including methods of emergency communication
- An explanation of what is expected of participants and the participant's responsibility to act as requested (conduct etc.)
- Restrictions to participation
- Agreed methods of communication within the group (signals and calls) devised before the activity commences
- Final check that all documentation is completed and submitted, particularly activity approval, parental approval and indemnity forms.

8 Ratios and Leader Presence

The ratio of participants to leaders and guides will vary according to the age and experience of participants, the conditions likely to be encountered, the duration of the activity, its remoteness and the potential to shorten the activity if needed. More challenging activities or low participant skill levels will require more leaders and guides to support participants. Less challenging activities or highly skilled participants require fewer leaders and guides.

Scout ACT rules regarding the minimum number of leaders/adults and on sharing tents apply.

The Leader, in consultation with the Scout Appointed Guide (where one is required) will also need to consider how adult participation and support is to be provided:

- On-resort downhill skiing/snowboarding – direct supervision will reduce substantially for the higher OAS stages. Agreed meeting times and places must be notified to all participants.
- Off-resort cross-country, snowshoeing and back-country skiing activities will require greater participation by the Leader/Guide, although it too should reduce as youth member skill increases as they progress through the OAS stages. As a general guide, an active Leader/Guide presence will be required to OAS stage 6. OAS stages 7-9 still require the participation of the Leader, who may be an Appointed Rover Crew Leader for Rovers, and a Scout Appointed Guide for the activity but whether they are physically present will be a judgement depending on the specific activity, its risks and the skills of the youth members.

9 Further Advice and References

The Alpine team is available to assist with queries: alpine@scoutsact.com.au.

The Australia Adventure Activity Standard and associated Good Practice Guides provide a guide to best practice when conducting adventurous activities. While alpine activities are not specifically covered, the Standard and Good Practice Guides provide guidance that will assist with their planning and conduct. They can be accessed at <https://australianaas.org.au/>.

Other useful sites include (Scouts ACT does not endorse or have any control over these sites):

- <https://www.ski.com.au/>
- <https://www.aussiesnow.com.au/>
- <https://www.snow-online.com/cross-country/australia>
- <https://mountainsportscollective.org/home>

10 Authority

This Chief Commissioner's Directive/Standard Operating Procedure or amended Directive/SOP was approved by the Chief Commissioner on 28 February 2001 and 25 August 2020.