

Caving - General Information

There are several items that all Scouts **MUST** have in order to be allowed to go caving.

First, all participants must have - and wear - **a caving helmet** equipped with an **operational headlamp**. Any Scout found inside the caves without his helmet on will be immediately escorted outside, and forfeit his privilege to ever go caving with the Troop again. Concussion combined with hypothermia is a life-threatening situation - especially when underground. Note that the Troop will provide helmets and headlamps.

Second, all participants must have **TWO ADDITIONAL FLASHLIGHTS** with fresh batteries and in good operating order. The second flashlight can be a small pocket-light. Each Scout must provide his own extra flashlights; the Troop does not have any extras. Note that dark colored flashlights should have yellow tape wrapped around them for easier viewing if they get misplaced or dropped. Extra flashlight bulbs and batteries are a good idea also, but not mandatory for caving trips lasting less than 4 hours underground. Extra flashlights, replacement bulbs, and maybe a few snacks and small drinks can be carried in a small daypack or hip-pack, again brightly colored.

Next, it is highly recommended - but not mandatory - that each Scout have knee and elbow pads, for protection against bruising while crawling through the caves.

Fourth, all participants need rugged clothing and sneakers to wear. Note that the underground conditions are always 54 degrees and wet; however, caving is fairly strenuous and generates a lot of body heat. I personally recommend old (but rugged) clothing which you don't mind throwing away (or washing 15 times) after the weekend is over. No "sweats" or other loose weave cotton. Do

NOT bring high quality outdoor clothing to wear inside the caves - it will be completely ruined by the time you're done. The sneakers must have decent tread on them - no "baloney skins" - many areas will be wet and slick, and you need all the purchase you can get. Boots will also work well, but will also be a mess by the time you're done (however, they'll come clean easily enough afterwards.)

Fifth, a tight fitting pair of thin gloves is helpful, but not mandatory. Leather or vinyl are best; don't bother bringing cloth gloves or mittens.

Sixth, you will need a complete set of clean clothes to change into after coming out of the caves - most drivers are not thrilled with the prospect of a carload of wet, muddy Scouts in their vehicles. Bring a towel to wipe off with as well.

Finally, bring a small plastic bag to store your fresh clothes in, and then your wet clothes in for the drives back to the campsites or home - write your names on the bags with a magic marker pen ahead of time!!!

Other rules:

1. The Guide is always in charge. If you feel otherwise, stay home.
2. The Group **MUST** stay together!!! The front of the group is responsible for maintaining contact with the rear. The guide cannot monitor everyone!
3. Absolutely no horseplay inside a cave - cave rescue is (typically) 6 hours away, and you may be charged extremely high rates for their services!
4. Do Not Bother the BATS! No touching, throwing rocks at them, or yelling at them. Bats are our friends - protect them by leaving them alone.

5. Do Not touch or otherwise disturb natural cave formations. Our presence alone is enough of an environmental insult.
6. Take all your trash with you - leave nothing behind. Take other people's trash if you find it.
7. Do not take souvenirs.
8. Always go to the bathroom just BEFORE entering a cave. Either that or wear Scout-size "Huggies." Leave no "deposits" for other cavers!
9. Never attempt any traverse, etc., that you are uncomfortable with; if unsure, discuss with the guide - don't be goaded into unsafe behavior.

Self-monitor! If you detect signs of hypothermia in yourself or your buddy, let the Guide know immediately - don't "tough it out!"