

## Introduction

Welcome to Troop 553, Boy Scouts of America.

Every Scout needs to know what is expected of him. The success of having an adventurous and safe outdoor program rests in the ability of the Boy Scout to take responsibility for his own behavior. Boy Scout accident, medical and liability insurance depends upon planned activities conducted with regard for safety and protection of property. All Scouts need to know what is "OK" and what is not. In order to guarantee acceptable conduct all adult Scouters need to know what is expected of them. The information outlined in this document establishes the procedures for running Troop 553's Scouting program.

The emphasis of the Boy Scout program is to promote and encourage boy leadership. In support of this program Troop 553 adult leaders are present as advisors, insuring safety and keeping the program oriented toward Scouting ideals. Troop, patrol and Patrol Leaders' Council meetings, camping trips and day trips shall be run by boy leaders, not by the adults.

But, boys are "boys," and there may be many times when you will question, "Why are they so disorganized?" "Why are the meetings so noisy and unproductive?" and "Why don't the adults step in and do something?"

In Scouting we believe that the best way to develop leadership is to let the boys have as much freedom as possible; applying just enough adult authority to keep them safely focused on the task at hand. As long as they are sincerely trying to accomplish the duties of their positions they are learning the rudiments of leadership.

This booklet outlines the application of general BSA policy to specific situations regarding Troop 553.

BSA policy is written in various official publications and is the final authority for resolving questions of policy. The troop committee is the final authority for implementing BSA policy in Troop 553. Proposed changes to Troop 553 policy can be submitted to adult leaders, the troop committee chairman or a committee member for review at a troop committee meeting.

Once again, "Welcome" to Troop 553. Keep in mind, Scouting is a family activity and we encourage parents to be involved in their Scout's development.

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## Chapter 1

### Parent Participation

*General:* The adults who provide supervision, support and time to make Troop 553 a success are volunteers. They will need your help. How you support your son's troop depends on your talent and available time. Both mothers and fathers can give a few hours to provide transportation, help maintain troop equipment, be a merit badge counselor, serve on our troop committee or serve in some other leadership positions. Whatever your volunteer role, our troop needs you to keep operating as a quality unit which makes our troop worthy of the fine Scouts it serves. Please complete the troop resource survey and return it to the Scoutmaster or troop committee chairman.

*Personal Growth Agreement:* The Scoutmaster will discuss with your son his strengths and interests and recommend ways he can use these in his Scouting activities. It will be up to your son to decide the goals he sets for himself as a growth agreement. The Scoutmaster will encourage and counsel your son along the way. Your interest in his growth in Scouting is vital in helping him to realize his personal responsibilities.

*Funding:* Each Scout is asked to share the cost of activities. Encourage your Scout to look for jobs where he can earn his own money for the cost of activities. "A Scout is thrifty."

## Chapter 2 New Scouts

*General:* Troop 553 is a relatively large troop with a dynamic membership. Currently, the troop enrolls 10 - 15 new Scouts per year. While a majority of the new members advance from the Cub Scout Webelos program, the troop does acquire boys transferring from other troops, districts and councils.

The Scoutmaster, Senior Patrol Leader or representative members from Troop 553 will attend Webelos bridging ceremonies of those Dens giving advance notice of boys intending to join Troop 553. Each Webelos who has stated his intent to join Troop 553 will be presented a Scout neckerchief from the troop and will be officially welcomed to the troop.

All new boys joining the troop will be placed in a patrol with others of his age or skill level. An Assistant Scoutmaster will be designated to work with the new Scouts.

*Information Packet:* The information packet is designed to give a new Scout and his parents details about Scouting and Troop 553. The packet includes the following:

This Troop Information Booklet.

BSA Medical Release Form (Parents authorization for emergency treatment).

Troop Resource Survey (Parents, please give some serious thought to signing up to help.)

Calendar of Events.

Roster of Troop Members.

BSA Application (both boy and adult).

BSA Unit Accident Insurance Information (this insurance is mandatory and is paid annually during the Troop 553's re-chartering).

Troop Information/Permission Requirements: Prior to any Scout participating in his first Troop 553 event, the following shall be returned to the Scoutmaster or one of the Assistant Scoutmasters:

Completed BSA application along with prorated share of the annual dues to pay for registration, Boys' Life subscription and BSA Medical Release Form (Parent's authorization for emergency treatment).

Troop Uniform Policy: Wearing the Boy Scout uniform "shows Scout spirit." It is not the purpose of the Scout uniform to hide the differences between boys or make them feel they are all the same. Scouts come from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. They have their own religious beliefs and family traditions. Scouting wants boys to take pride in these differences rather than to hide them or be ashamed of them. There is one way all Scouts are alike. Whenever a Scout sees another Scout in uniform he knows he is like that person because both have committed to the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law. The Scout Oath and Law bind all Scouts, the world over, in a common purpose. The Scout uniform identifies Scouts openly with someone of the same beliefs and values. By wearing the uniform Scouts are taking an open stand for their convictions. BSA policy allows a troop several options regarding uniforms. Troop 553 has elected the following:

Class A:

Scout shirt (long or short sleeve).

Scout trousers (long or short). If short pants are worn, Scout stockings or Scout socks shall be worn.

Scout neckerchief, BSA neckerchief with any Scouting related neckerchief slide, or any Scouting related bolo.

Scout hat - the baseball-style mesh Scout hat is the preferred hat for BSA events, i.e., troop meetings, merit badge sessions, etc. Any Scouting related hat, though, is acceptable.

Any closed-toe shoes or boot (as a safety precaution Troop 553 policy precludes the wearing of sandals at scouting events.)

Scout belt.

Scout socks.

Note: Order of the Arrow (OA) sashes are only worn at OA functions, not at regular troop meetings or functions.

Class B (may be prescribed for summer events/meetings or travel to/from Scouting events.)

Scout T-shirt. The preferred T-shirt is the Troop 553 red T-shirt. However, any Scouting related T-shirt is acceptable.

Scout trousers (long or short).

Scout hat is optional.

Any closed-toe shoes or boot (as a safety precaution troop policy precludes the wearing of sandals at scouting events.)

Scout belt.

Scout socks.

Scouts should wear their uniform for all Scouting activities. Encourage your Scout to comply. An entire uniform will be required for Scoutmaster Conferences, Courts of Honor, some district, council and out-of-council events, e.g., summer camp. A merit badge sash will be required after six merit badges are earned. (Up to six merit badges can be worn on the right sleeve of the long-sleeve shirt.) The merit badge sash is a required uniform item for special occasions.

New uniforms are available for sale through the Boy Scouts of America Supply Division (1-800-323-0732), the Gulf Coast Council's district office (1-850-476-6336) located at 9440 University Parkway, Pensacola, or from any other authorized BSA distributor.

The troop maintains a uniform exchange box. Items that older Scouts have outgrown are placed in the box for use by new/younger Scouts. Any Scout may use the exchange service. Please donate uniform items when your Scout(s) outgrows uniform items.

If for any reason a Scout is unable to afford such a uniform the troop will help arrange for one. The Scout's parents or guardian will discuss with the Scoutmaster or troop committee chairman, in private, the particular financial circumstances. Personal details will remain confidential.

Uniform inspections will be conducted by the boy leaders once a quarter.

**Dues Policy:** Troop dues are \$60 per year to be paid at re-chartering in January or prorated at \$5.00 per month, when joining. Scouts who are delinquent in their dues will not be permitted to advance or participate in troop camping trips or events. As with any organization, activities require money. Financial problems are understood. If such occurs let us know so we can work out an agreeable payment plan and keep your Scout active. Dues include a subscription to Boys' Life magazine, BSA membership dues, insurance and Troop 553 dues.

**Calendar of Events:** Troop meetings and monthly events are planned for a 12-month period.

**Meetings:** Meetings are held at Bluewater Community Church weekly from 6:30 P.M. to 8.00 P.M. every Monday unless the Monday is a Federal holiday, or unless otherwise denoted on the annual calendar. Parents are responsible for arranging transportation for their Scout. Scouts should not arrive any earlier than 6.15 P.M. and should be picked up by 8.20 P.M. unless otherwise directed by the Scoutmaster. Parents are responsible for their own child's safety before and after Scout meetings. Do not leave your Scout at the meeting place if no adult leader is present. Loitering is not permitted.

Scouts are not permitted to loiter outside during meetings. If the Scout does not report to the Scout meeting, Troop 553 is not responsible for him.

Courts of Honor: Troop 553 conducts quarterly courts of honor to recognize our Scouts' hard work. Courts of honor are family affairs and parents are encouraged to attend to honor the boys for their achievements. Troop Court of Honors are usually be held in September, December, March and June. Eagle courts of honor are conducted separately from the regularly scheduled events for individual Scouts as needed.

Summer camp: To give Scouts the opportunity to achieve BSA goals for long-term camping, Troop 553 attends at least one week of camp at an approved BSA facility during the summer. It is a Troop 553 policy not to repeat summer camp at the same facility two summers in succession. This assures variety in the troop's objectives for long-term camping and affords Scouts the opportunity to experience different camp programs.

Short-term camping: Troop 553 conducts a camping trip or special event each month. When possible these events will take advantage of events planned by the district or council. Short-term camps promote advancement opportunities, fun, fitness and comradeship.

In preparing the annual calendar the Senior Patrol Leader will canvas the troop for desired events. The Senior Patrol Leader will then hold a meeting of the Patrol Leaders' Council with the troop's Scout and adult leadership and prepare a proposed calendar for approval by the troop committee. The troop committee will consider the boys' desires for an annual program with respect to the ability to support the program. Once the calendar of events is approved the Scoutmaster will arrange for printing and distribution of the calendar.

### Chapter 3 Troop Organization

*General:* Troop 553 is organized in accordance with BSA guidelines. The following descriptions highlight areas within the troop's organization.

*Organization:*

*Chartering organization:* The Bluewater Community Church is the chartering organization (CO) for BSA Troop 553. The charter allows Bluewater Community Church to host a BSA troop for its community and youth objectives. In turn Bluewater Community Church agrees to support the troop by providing a safe meeting place with adequate facilities. The primary function of the CO is to select and approve all adult leaders (SM, Assistant Scoutmaster, committee chairman and members). The chartering organization is responsible for background checks of all adult applicants and will have the final approval for adults filling positions with the troop.

*Chartering organization representative:* A member of Bluewater Community Church who serves on the troop committee and acts as a liaison between the troop and the chartering organization. He or she selects a troop committee chairman and encourages training, helps recruit other adult leaders, assists in unit re-chartering, encourages service to the organization and is an active member of the district committee.

*Troop committee:* The troop committee is a group of adults, generally parents of the Scouts, who support the troop by insuring that the troop's adult leadership is adequate, by providing various support functions, delivering a quality troop program and handling troop administration, and by insuring that the troop is functioning according to official policy. Committee meetings are held on the last Tuesday of each month, as indicated on the calendar of events. The troop committee consists of a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, an outdoor activity coordinator, an advancement coordinator, a fund-raising coordinator, a Court of Honor coordinator, a transportation coordinator and a quartermaster. (See BSA Troop Committee Guidebook for further information.)

*Troop committee chairman:* The committee chairman serves as the "chairman of the board," the board being the troop committee.

**Scoutmaster:** The Scoutmaster is responsible for overseeing the operations of the troop. The Scoutmaster serves as the "chief executive officer." The Scoutmaster's main responsibility is to the Scouts of the troop and all Assistant Scoutmasters assigned. The Scoutmaster attends troop committee meetings and reports the status of the troop and the annual program of events.

**Assistant Scoutmaster:** Aside from being responsible for a particular function each Assistant Scoutmaster acts as an advisor to a pre-assigned patrol.

**Assistant Scoutmaster (new Scouts):** Insures that all new Scouts are properly oriented to the troop by providing the boys with necessary information, forms and counseling.

**Assistant Scoutmaster (Venture):** Provides guidance to the troop's Venture crew by insuring all their intended functions are being carried out in accordance with BSA policy.

**Senior Patrol Leader:** The Senior Patrol Leader is the boy leader of the troop elected by his fellow Scouts. He sets the agenda and presides at all Patrol Leaders' Council meetings, runs the weekly troop meetings and appoints other boy leaders assigning specific responsibilities as needed.

**Assistant Senior Patrol Leader:** The assistant Senior Patrol Leader, appointed by the Senior Patrol Leader, assists the Senior Patrol Leader in conducting meetings and acts as the Senior Patrol Leader in the Senior Patrol Leader's absence. He is responsible for training and giving direction to the quartermaster, scribe, troop historian, librarian and instructors.

**Patrol leaders:** Patrol Leaders are elected by the Scouts within the patrol and are responsible for their individual patrols at all times. They preside at patrol meetings, as well as control their patrol during troop functions. They represent their patrol at Patrol Leaders Council meetings and report to the Senior Patrol Leader for all matters concerning their patrol.

Instructors: Older Scouts who have advanced in rank and training provide a corps of skills and knowledge on which the Senior Patrol Leader can develop training programs in support of the troop's annual training objective.

Venture Scouts: To insure the continued interest and participation of our senior Scouts, Troop 553 will participate in BSA's Venture program organizing a troop affiliated Venture crew to pursue activities of interest to older or more senior Scouts. Older and more experienced Scouts may form a Venture crew which operates much the same as a patrol. Scouts shall be at least 14 years of age or have completed the 7th grade. Venture allows concentration on high adventure activities. Members will continue with regular Scouting advancement programs, troop activities and troop leadership responsibilities. Venture crew activities should be planned and performed in addition to the regular troop requirements. An Assistant Scoutmaster will be appointed to oversee activities. Membership in the group will be at the recommendation of the adult leadership and will be based on maturity and skill ability. Due to the risk involved with some of the advanced skill activities, parental permission is required for participation in Venture crew activities.

Troop guides: Older, experienced Scouts appointed by the Scoutmaster and the Assistant Scoutmaster. They help younger Scouts progress through the ranks of Scouting and will be assisted by the Assistant Scoutmaster (New Scouts).

Other appointed jobs: For additional job descriptions see the Junior Leader Handbook.

#### Forming Patrols:

The "patrol method" gives Scouts an experience in group living and citizenship. It places a certain amount of responsibility on young shoulders and teaches boys how to accept it. The patrol method builds patrols into strong active units. This is best accomplished through long-term association with shared, common experiences from camping or special events. Troop 553's goal is to maintain a patrol's integrity through as much of a Scout's career as possible. Given the dynamics of the people of our community that is not always possible. If it becomes necessary to reorganize patrols as a

result of attrition or growth, then the Scoutmaster and adult leadership will determine new patrol organization.

Troop 553's goal is to maintain two - five patrols of approximately eight Scouts each. There will be no more than 10 Scouts per patrol. When one of the patrols reaches more than 10 members and the others have eight or more members, a new patrol will be formed.

**Intra-Troop Transfers:** A Scout may request to change patrols. The Senior Patrol Leader and the Scoutmaster will make the decision.

#### Chapter 4 Adult Leader Policy

**General:** The adult leadership of Troop 553 has two major goals:

Provide an environment for the boys to live the ideals of Scouting, including a chance to develop and demonstrate leadership abilities.

Provide an adult organization structure that can adapt to changes in its staffing requirements.

In keeping with these goals the adult leaders will act primarily as advisors giving maximum opportunity for the Scouts to show responsibility.

**Adult Leader Positions:**

The following positions reside at the committee level:

**Committee Chairman** -- Responsibilities as described above.

**Secretary** -- Attends all committee meeting, takes minutes and types and distributes minutes for approval.

Chartering Organization Representative -- Responsibilities as described above.

Treasurer -- Responsible for the entire troop's financial records (this includes the recording of all incoming and outgoing moneys) and provides a monthly written report on troop finances to the troop committee. The yearly projected troop budget is to be compiled and submitted to the committee for review at the January committee meeting.

Advancement -- Responsible for the administration of the troop advancement program, keeps records and prepares reports for submission to the Gulf Coast Council.

Fund Raising -- Researches and recommends fund raising projects to meet the troops financial requirements. Organizes volunteers to assist in funding raising. Obtains fund raising approval from Gulf Coast Council.

Quartermaster -- Responsible for working with the troop Quartermaster in the organization, control and maintenance of troop equipment.

Outdoor -- Works with the Patrol Leaders' Council and the Scoutmaster to determine transportation requirements for camping trips/special events and organizes drivers and vehicles for events. Prepares tour requests and submits to council.

The following positions reside at the troop level:

Scoutmaster

Assistant Scoutmaster (New Scouts)

Assistant Scoutmaster (Venture crew)

Assistant Scoutmasters (assigned to individual Patrols)

Positions will be filled as supported by the number of adult volunteers. If the number of adult volunteers is not sufficient to fill all requirements the

committee chairman and/or the Scoutmaster may combine committee or troop positions after gaining approval of the committee.

**Adult Leader Training:** Any adult who becomes involved with the troop is strongly encouraged to take advantage of Leadership Training courses offered by the Choctaw District, Gulf Coast Council, BSA. This training insures the troop's adult leaders remain on target with the aims of Scouting. Until leadership training can be arranged adult leaders will be required to view the BSA "Fast Start" video and be familiar with the Youth Protection Program guidelines for Boy Scout leaders.

**Adult Leaders' Meetings:** Adult leaders are encouraged to become involved with all aspects of the Scouting program. The following is a list of some of the suggested meetings that adult leaders may attend:

Troop committee meetings.

Adult district roundtables.

Special "called" troop committee meetings.

Weekly troop meetings.

Training sessions.

**Adult Leader Conduct:** Adult leaders shall exhibit the ideals of Scouting when working with boys. They will strive to set the example in their handling of the boys. Standards of conduct in personal habits, language, hygiene and interaction with Scouts will be in accordance with the Scout Oath and Law. The Scoutmaster is responsible for the conduct of adult leaders.

*General:* Like any other activity, a leadership role within Scouting requires an extraordinary commitment. A leadership role with Troop 553 demands time and sacrifice of the Scout. Although Scouting is open to any boy at least 10 years and six months of age, Troop 553 leadership positions should only be considered by those boys who:

Demonstrate the proper example.

Are willing to give to the troop more than they receive.

Are willing to put troop activities on a higher priority than other comparable activities.

Available Boy Leader Positions:

Elected positions:

Senior Patrol Leader -- Elected by the troop.

Patrol leader -- Elected by individual patrols.

Venture Crew Chief - Elected by the Venture Scouts.

Appointed positions:

Junior Assistant Scoutmaster -- Appointed by the Scoutmaster.

Troop Guide(s) -- Appointed by the Scoutmaster.

Den Chief -- Appointed by the Scoutmaster.

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader - Appointed by the Senior Patrol Leader.

Assistant Patrol Leader - Appointed by the Patrol Leader.

Scribe -- Appointed by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Chaplain's aide -- Appointed by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Quartermaster -- Appointed by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Librarian -- Appointed by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Historian -- Appointed by the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Patrol scribe -- Appointed by the patrol leader.

Patrol quartermaster -- Appointed by the patrol leader.

Troop Elections: Troop elections are held semi-annually generally in May and November at a regular troop meeting. Newly elected leaders assume their new posts at the first regular meeting the following regular meeting.

A general election of the entire troop will be conducted for Senior Patrol Leader. The outgoing Senior Patrol Leader will preside over the election, accepting nominations and supervising the collection of ballots. Voting will be conducted by secret ballot. Election for Senior Patrol Leader will be conducted first to allow candidates not elected to run for assistant Senior Patrol Leader and/or patrol leader. The Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster and the outgoing Senior Patrol Leader or a Junior Assistant Scoutmaster will count and verify the vote. The candidate receiving a simple majority of the members present will be declared winner. If more than two boys are running for a position and no one receives 50 percent of the votes, a revote will be taken between the two candidates until one candidate receives a majority of the votes.

Individual Patrols will elect their Patrol Leader. A patrol leader election will be held immediately following the election of the Senior Patrol Leader and appointment of the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. Only patrol members will vote for their respective patrol leader. Votes will be by secret ballots. Ballots will be counted and verified by the outgoing patrol leader and a troop guide or an Assistant Scoutmaster.

All other leadership positions will be recommended by the Senior Patrol Leader and approved by the Scoutmaster. All leadership positions will be

rotated every six months to give each member of the troop maximum opportunity to serve.

An attempt will be made to get 100 percent of the troop's membership in attendance during the night of the election. No election will be conducted if less than two-thirds the general membership are present.

#### Qualifications:

**Senior Patrol Leader:** Each Scout running for the office of Senior Patrol Leader must be a First Class Scout and must have attended (or agree to attend) Junior Leader Training.

**Assistant Senior Patrol Leader:** Each Scout appointed to the office of Assistant Senior Patrol Leader must be a First Class Scout and must have attended or agreed to attend a Junior Leader Training course.

**Patrol Leader:** Each Scout running for the office of patrol leader must be at least Second Class Scout.

**Junior Leader Training:** When instructors are available the troop will offer a Junior Leader Training (JLT) course once per year in the fall. In addition Gulf Coast Council usually offers JLT once a year. For a Scout to be eligible to hold a troop leadership position he must have attended at least one of these above mentioned courses or agree to attend the next available course.

**Impeachment:** The seriousness of impeachment must be understood before proceedings are begun. Impeachment will be initiated only when the situation can not be reversed with direct leadership and the added supervision by the adult leadership. Given the above, impeachment proceedings against a patrol leader, assistant patrol leader and/or Senior Patrol Leader can be initiated at any time during his tenure in office. To initiate an impeachment a written petition must be presented to the Scoutmaster, including:

Specifically why it is thought the boy leader in question is not fit for office.

Background circumstances regarding the problem.

Signature of two-thirds of the membership of either the patrol in the case of a patrol leader impeachment; the patrol leaders in the case of the Senior Patrol Leader.

The Scoutmaster and the Assistant Scoutmasters will determine final judgment. The troop committee and parents of the boy will be advised of all actions and circumstances behind the action.

Patrol Leaders' Council (PLC):

The Patrol Leaders' Council is responsible for planning and conducting the troop's activities. The troop committee interacts with the Patrol Leaders' Council through the Scoutmaster. The Patrol Leaders' Council comprises the following voting members:

Senior Patrol Leader -- Leads the Patrol Leaders' Council.

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Patrol Leaders -- One for each patrol.

Venture Crew Chief.

Troop Guides.

Scoutmaster and Assistant Scoutmasters.

Other Scouts as required by the Senior Patrol Leader.

The Patrol Leaders' Council meets monthly to:

Plan the calendar of events.

Plan monthly events.

Plan and organize weekly meetings and assign responsibility for planned events in accordance with the monthly activity.

Completion of the weekly meeting plan for each weekly meeting.

Discuss problems.

Make recommendations on improving troop operations.

## Chapter 6 Advancement

**Advancement Program Defined:** Advancement is the process by which youth members progress from rank to rank; a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is designed to help the boy have an exciting and meaningful Scouting experience.

Education is the chief function of the Scouting movement and the basis of the advancement program. A fundamental principle of advancement is that the boy's progress is a natural outcome of his activities in his patrol and troop. The rank requirements shall furnish the basis of the activities of the unit. Recognition is gained through leadership in the troop, attending and participating in its activities, living the ideals of Scouting and proficiency in activities related to outdoor life, useful skills and career exploration.

All advancement procedures shall be administered under conditions that harmonize with the aims and purpose of the BSA; to strengthen character, body, mind and the concept of being a participating citizen.

The Boy Scout requirements for rank advancement shall be the basis for the Scouts' advancement. There are four steps in the procedure -- learning, testing, reviewing and recognition.

Scouting ranks are Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star, Life and Eagle. Eagle Palms may be awarded for additional merit badges until the Scout's 18th birthday.

The responsibility of the troop committee is to ensure the troop's program is conducted in such a way that the Scouts have an opportunity to advance on the basis of learning, testing, reviewing and recognition.

The responsibility for merit badge qualifications shall rest with the counselor. Merit badge counselors are required to be registered adult members of BSA. The merit badge counselor shall prepare and qualify youth members. There is no board of review procedure for merit badges, but public recognition will be given at a Court of Honor.

*Advancement Policy:* Advancement in BSA is totally dependent upon the boy. Each boy is expected to pursue the various advancement requirements, awards, badges and ranks at his own pace. We encourage him to involve his family, other Scouts, the Scoutmaster and any other sources to help him.

The troop's routine program will emphasize Scouting skills and leadership training; both at weekly meetings and at camping trips. As a matter of routine, merit badges will not be taught as part of Troop 553's regularly scheduled meetings. Some meetings may focus on a particular merit badge as a means of introducing Scouts to the subject, but completion of the badge is an individual effort by the Scout. The troop will provide guidance and assistance in completing merit badges outside the weekly meetings, i.e., classes prior to meetings or on camping trips. (On occasion, a merit badge may be taught in the regular meeting if for a unique reason.) The extra effort and experience gained by pursuing merit badges through approved counselors is important in maintaining the quality and maturity of the upper ranks of Star, Life and Eagle.

Advancement to Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class concentrate on Scouting skills rather than merit badges. Skills shall be taught by other Scouts and adult leaders. The Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmasters shall hold Scoutmaster Conferences at a mutually agreed upon time and place whenever a Scout has satisfactorily finished all requirements for a particular rank. A board of review shall be conducted as necessary, and will be organized by the troop committee's advancement chairman with the assistance of other committee members.

Advancement requirements for Star, Life and Eagle ranks emphasize merit badge work only after a boy has a solid foundation of basic Scouting skills.

Eagle advancement: An advancement packet discussing Eagle requirements can be obtained from the Scoutmaster upon completion of the Life Scout award. The packet contains the following items:

National BSA Eagle application.

Eagle service project workbook. The Scout **MUST** use this workbook and follow the instructions therein.

Merit Badges:

Earning merit badges give Scouts self-confidence by teaching them to overcome obstacles to achieve a goal. The Scout also learns career skills, develops socially and may develop physical skills and hobbies that give a lifetime of healthful recreation. To earn merit badges the following sequential procedures shall be followed:

Obtain a merit badge application ("blue card") from the Scoutmaster, an Assistant Scoutmaster, or the advancement chairman. The card must be signed by the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster signifying approval before any work is started on the merit badge.

Contact the merit badge counselor and arrange meetings.

Complete the merit badge requirements under the guidance of the counselor.

Ensure the counselor signs the card verifying completion of all requirements.

Return the card to the Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster and obtain his/her signature to indicate completion of the merit badge requirements.

Present the completed card to the advancement chairman for forwarding to the council for registration and procurement of the badge.

**Youth Protection Program:** The BSA Youth Protection Program policy requires that a Scout must have at least one other person with him at each meeting with the merit badge counselor. BSA policy prohibits one-on-one situations between adults and Scouts. The buddy can be a parent or guardian, brother, sister, relative, friend or another Scout.

**Group instructions:** While merit badges may be earned in group instruction, this method is not preferred for most merit badges as it bypasses one of the key purposes of the merit badge plan; working closely with a qualified adult. Group instruction is most practical when special facilities, expert personnel and/or limited counselors make individual instruction inappropriate. When the group method is used as much individual attention as possible should be afforded each candidate's project and his ability to fulfill all requirements.

**Merit badge counselor:** A counselor working with a Scout acquaints the boy with an adult knowledgeable in one or more fields, an experience invaluable to a Scout. The counselor introduces subjects that may lead to a career choice or to a lifetime pursuit. The troop advancement chairman and the Scoutmaster will maintain a list of approved merit badge counselors. The troop has approved merit badge counselors other than those on the council's approved list. The council and district advancement committee must approve merit badge counselors, even those parents only serving one unit (Troop 553). Counselors must register as Scouters. In all cases the advancement chairman must have a completed Merit Badge Counselor Application on record for each applicable person.

Merit badges will not be offered as part of the regular troop calendar of events as a matter of routine; however, to spark an interest in a subject area the troop may use merit badge counselors to make presentations covering the highlights of a merit badge. Scouts are then given an opportunity to try a skill related to the badge. Also, work on some merit badges may be arranged at some camping trips.

No Scout, parent, Assistant Scoutmaster or committee member will arrange for a merit badge class to run concurrent with the regularly scheduled troop meeting unless specifically approved by the Patrol Leaders' Council. Troop meetings are reserved for conducting skill and leadership training and

general troop business. With the approval of both the Scoutmaster and advancement chairman, merit badge classes may be scheduled prior to the regular meeting. Scoutmaster approval will insure reservation of a meeting place. Approval of the advancement chairman will ensure approved counselors, "blue cards," merit badge books and other administrative requirements are available and met.

#### Service Projects:

**Star and Life:** Work on service projects for credit toward advancement to Star and Life ranks shall be approved by the Scoutmaster in advance of starting the project. Only adult leaders are authorized to sign-off service project requirements. If there is any doubt as to the validity of the project the matter will be referred to the troop committee for resolution.

**Eagle:** Eagle service projects shall be of lasting value to the community rather than completion of routine upkeep and preventive maintenance. The troop committee and a member of the District Committee shall approve the project in advance of the Scout beginning any work. The Troop 553 Committee requires that the Eagle candidate brief the troop committee on his project at a regularly scheduled committee meeting. The Eagle candidate must take into consideration the lead-time required for troop and district committee approval in planning work schedules. The briefing shall outline the scope, scale and requirements of the proposed project. The committee will review the candidate's plan for completeness in planning and ability of the troop to support the project to completion. The schedule of work should be examined in detail to ensure there are no major conflicts with other planned troop activities. Upon completion of the service project, the Eagle candidate shall provide the advancement chairman with a written description of the project and, where appropriate, a schedule of participants and hours worked.

Scouts of any rank can arrange for service projects that benefit the community. However, if the project will require Troop 553 resources then the project should be presented to the Patrol Leaders' Council for discussion, scheduling and Scoutmaster Approval.

#### Position of Responsibility Requirements for Star, Life and Eagle Rank:

One or a combination of the following positions will be accepted as fulfilling the leadership requirements for the above ranks:

Patrol Leader.

Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Senior Patrol Leader.

Junior Assistant Scoutmaster.

Den Chief.

Troop Chaplain.

Troop Scribe.

Troop Quartermaster.

Troop Librarian.

Troop Guide.

Venture Crew Chief.

In addition to simply holding a position, the officers holding scribe, quartermaster, librarian and historian may be required to perform one major project to improve his respective area. The Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster must approve this project. These projects will be separate and distinct from the "service projects" required for the above ranks. For example a new historian may construct his own record of the troop during his tenure.

Requirements for Scout Spirit and Participation:

Scout Spirit -- In order to fulfill the requirements for Scout spirit, the Scout must demonstrate Scout spirit by living the Scout Oath and the Law in

his everyday life. Participation -- Fulfillment of the Participation Requirement is defined as attending 75% of scheduled troop activities over the six months period immediately prior to any rank advancement.

## Chapter 7 Discipline

*General:* Discipline policy in Scouting is simple -- the doors of Scouting are always open to those who strive to follow its law. Adherence to Troop 553 policies will, primarily, be handled by the boy leaders with adult intervention only to maintain safety, preclude property damage, avoid disrupting other organizations' activities and/or restore order in extreme cases of unruliness.

*Obedience:* Obedience in Troop 553 is to the Scout Oath and Law. The Oath and Law make being a good citizen of the troop, camp or community possible. Obedience to the Scout Law includes respect for Scout leadership and adult leadership and all members and guests of the troop. Respect for adult and Scout leadership is expected. Under no circumstances will adult or boy leaders administer punishment for any reason. Hazing, of any type, will not be tolerated. Boys or adults observing such activity will take immediate measures to stop such activity.

### Enforcing Discipline:

The patrol leaders will handle discipline in the patrols. Patrol leaders have the authority to ask any patrol member to leave a patrol meeting and report to the Senior Patrol Leader.

When the patrol leader cannot handle the problem, he must obtain help from the Senior Patrol Leader. The only person the Senior Patrol Leader will accept a complaint from is the patrol leader. The Senior Patrol Leader has the authority to ask that Scout to leave the meeting area and report to the Scoutmaster.

When the Senior Patrol Leader cannot handle the problem, he must obtain the help of the Scoutmaster. The only person the Scoutmaster will accept a complaint from is the Senior Patrol Leader.

When the Scoutmaster is approached with a complaint, the complaint will be recorded on the Scout's record. Note the following actions:

First Senior Patrol Leader complaint -- Conference with the Scoutmaster.

Second Senior Patrol Leader complaint -- Conference with Scoutmaster and a phone call to parents explaining the problem and stating that one more complaint may result in a suspension for one month. Parent(s) may be requested to attend meetings to help supervise their Scout. The Scout may be assigned to appear before a board of review as a lesser disciplinary action prior to suspension from troop activities.

Third Senior Patrol Leader complaint -- Conference with Scoutmaster and parents. Based on the Scoutmaster's recommendation, the Scout may be suspended from all troop activities for a period of time as recommended by the Scoutmaster.

The above steps are not meant to discourage either the patrol leaders or Senior Patrol Leaders from seeking advice from the Scoutmaster or any adult leader when they are having leadership challenges, but are intended to state discipline options in advance. Scout leaders should remember and use their chain of command.

Troop Reinstatement Review Board:

This board evaluates Scouts who have been suspended from the troop as a result of the third Senior Patrol Leader complaint as well as the use of drugs, alcohol and/or tobacco as outlined in the troop discipline policy. After the completion of the defined suspension period and prior to resuming troop activities, the committee chairman will convene a reinstatement review board to meet with the Scout and his parents to assess his intentions regarding pursuit of the Scouting program. The members of the troop reinstatement review board will consist of the committee chairman,

Scoutmaster and Senior Patrol Leader and as deemed necessary, respective designated representatives from the committee.

Based on the conclusions of the Board, the Scout will either:

Resume troop participation and activities,

Or

Continue his suspension for a period as recommended by the Scoutmaster and approved by the board.

Continuation of the suspension requires a meeting with parents and the committee chairman and Scoutmaster to discuss the position of the board.

Upon reinstatement a Scout will be on probation for a minimum of two months. Additional infractions within the probation period are grounds for immediate dismissal by the troop committee.

Failure to attend the review board meeting will result in an automatic dismissal from the troop.

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco:

Any Scout guilty of using, possessing and/or distributing a controlled substance (drugs and alcohol) will be dropped from the troop roster. Parents of the guilty Scout will be advised of all actions taken. The Scout may later be allowed to return once his problem has been resolved to the satisfaction of the troop Reinstatement Review Board.

No Scout will be allowed to use a controlled substance of any type at any Scouting function. This includes those boys who have parental permission to use tobacco.

BSA recommends that leaders not use tobacco products in any form nor allow their use at any BSA activity.

Parents of Scouts required to take prescription medication over the period of a troop event will discuss the requirement with the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster. Serious medical requirements may require a parent to attend an event and administer medication.

#### Do's And Don'ts:

The Scoutmaster has the authority to confiscate and destroy all items deemed inappropriate or dangerous.

The Boy Scouts of America prohibits the securing, use and display of fireworks in conjunction with programs and activities except where the fireworks display is conducted under the auspices of a certified or licensed fireworks control expert. Scouts of Troop 553 are prohibited from possessing or using fireworks on any Troop 553 activity.

Firearms will be permitted at troop meeting only if the troop program calls for such activities. Any such activities will have the approval of the Scoutmaster and the troop committee.

Sheath knives are not permitted. For Scouts to carry pocket knives, they must have earned their "Totin' Chit" as prescribed by BSA training requirements and have their "Totin' Chit" card in their possession whenever they handle a knife.

For Scouts to carry or use flame producing items or to build fires, they must have earned their "Fireman Chit" as prescribed by BSA training requirements and have their "Fireman Chit" card in their possession whenever they carry or use flame producing items or build fires.

Each Scout is responsible for making restitution for any damage caused by his actions or negligence. "A Scout is trustworthy."

Scout drivers under 18 shall meet the Youth Member Exception clause in local and national tour permits before they act as drivers on any Scout event; including weekly meetings. As a reminder the Youth Member Exception states: When traveling to an area, regional or national Boy Scout activity or any Explorer event under the leadership of an adult (21+) tour

leader, a youth member at least 16 years of age may be a driver subject to the following conditions:

Six months' driving experience as a licensed driver. (Time on a learner's permit or equivalent is not to be counted.)

No record of accidents or moving violations.

Parental permission has been granted to leader, driver and riders.

Scout passengers in vehicles to and from events will remember they are a guest of the driver/owner of the vehicle. Scouts will follow the rules set by the driver/owner, e.g., eating, drinking, seating arrangements and noise levels. Insurance regulations require that seat belts shall be worn at all times.

Fighting is not permitted and is grounds for immediate disciplinary action.

Sexually explicit materials, including "Playboy," "Penthouse," "Hustler" etc., shall not be brought to Scout activities. If found, such materials will be confiscated and returned to the parents of any Scout involved.

Foul language, swearing, cursing, blasphemy and abusive/suggestive gestures are not in keeping with the ideals of Scouting and will not be allowed. "A Scout is Reverent, Courteous and Clean."

Troop 553 policy discourages Scouts from bringing personal radios, televisions, compact disc or cassette players and/or electronic video games on weekend camping trips. For long trips over three hours, arrangements can be made for the use of the above equipment during travel to and from the campsite.

*General:* The BSA program is designed for fun in the outdoors. The troop committee, in support of the Scoutmaster, will make every attempt to have at least one outdoor activity per month. These activities will most often be camping trips, but on occasion might be day events. The activities planned for these events will reinforce the skills and ideals of Scouting.

*Planning For Activities:* Camping trips and activities shall be planned for an entire year by the summer Patrol Leaders' Council as part of the process of planning the troop's calendar of events. Camping trip themes/activities shall be related to the troop meeting themes. Camping trip themes are to be planned by the Patrol Leaders' Council at its regular meetings.

*Support for Activities:*

Two registered adult leaders or one adult leader and a parent of a participating Scout (at least one leader must be 21 years of age) are required for all trips or events. If there is a female guest (Venture crew) then one leader must be a female 21 years of age or older.

The Scoutmaster, an Assistant Scoutmaster or a troop committee member will be assigned responsibility for each camping trip and event and will:

Notify Scouts and families in advance of camping trip details to include approximate cost.

File camp/facilities request forms.

File tour permits with Gulf Coast Council two weeks in advance.

Arrange transportation.

Account for necessary fees (camp fees and food costs).

Assure adequate leadership is available.

Guidelines for arranging transportation:

All drivers must be licensed.

Adult tour leader (21 years of age) will be in charge and accompanied by an assistant.

All driving should be done in daylight when possible.

Owner/driver will have property damage and personal liability insurance coverage to at least the minimum dollar limits prescribed by BSA.

Occupancy limits of the vehicle will not be exceeded.

Each occupant will wear a seat belt.

Vehicles will not travel in convoy.

Funding For Activities:

Scouts participating in activities will be responsible for the cost of the event. The troop dues do not provide sufficient funds to sponsor troop camping trips and events. The adult leader responsible for a particular camping trip will advise Scouts of any fees required.

Food will normally be the responsibility of the individual or patrol. As part of the camping trip planning process each patrol will determine a camping trip menu then derive a shopping list approximately three weeks prior to the camping trip. From the shopping list the patrol will assign a member(s) to purchase food. The Scout(s) buying food will determine the cost per Scout and announce that as soon as possible prior to the camping trip/event. Scouts participating in the event will bring all moneys by the Monday meeting just prior to the Friday/Saturday departure for the camping trip. This allows the Scout(s) purchasing the food that week to purchase supplies for the trip.

Scouts intending to participate in a camping trip/event shall be present on the Monday meeting prior to the camping trip with funds or they will not be allowed to participate unless they make prior arrangements with the Scoutmaster, patrol leader and the Scout purchasing the food.

On occasion the troop will practice troop dining rather than the normal patrol method. In these cases the procedures above will be used to plan/purchase food. Patrol leaders should prepare a duty roster for each camping trip and post it at the patrol campsite. The Patrol's should maintain a patrol record on menu planning and food purchasing duties to ensure all members share in the responsibility.

While we realize the dynamics of family schedules, parents must understand camping with large groups of Scouts requires detailed planning to ensure enough food, water, transportation, troop equipment, funds and adult supervision. Unannounced participants create hardships on the entire troop who have planned the details and creates disharmony and ill will. Simply put, the troop shall have a firm commitment for camping trip participation, with supporting funds, not later than the last Monday meeting before departure on an event.

Troop Camping:

Camping: Whenever possible patrols shall camp as individual units and practice the patrol method. The intent is that each patrol will have:

A separate campsite.

Its own cooking and campfire site.

Its own dining fly.

Its own patrol flag.

The adult leadership will also function as a patrol. Each group will strive to provide the best example of camping practices.

Scouts will not leave a campsite with out the permission of the Scoutmaster or an Assistant Scoutmaster. The buddy system will be used on all camping trips; any Scout leaving the campsite will be accompanied by a buddy.

All Scouts will share in the work and duties of their individual campsites. Patrol Leaders or equivalents will establish rotating schedules to assure work such as cooking, cleaning and wood gathering is done by all in a fair manner.

All members of Troop 553 will observe the Outdoor Code. This will include leaving the campsite better than found.

Cooking: Various forms of cooking will be experienced, including individual, patrol and troop. Camping trip format will be determined by the Patrol Leaders' Council and will depend on the other activities scheduled.

Visitors on Outings:

Adult family members are encouraged to participate in troop camping trips. Guests will pay the same camp and food fees as other members of the troop. Guest will be expected to provide their own camping equipment, i.e., tents, bedding and cooking utensils. The troop may be able to provide some equipment but requirements shall be identified in advance and the troop's ability to respond will depend on the number of members participating in the event.

Perspective Boy Scouts may be invited to attend camping trips/events in accordance with BSA regulations. A Scout intending to invite a guest for a camping trip will notify the patrol leader, Senior Patrol Leader and Scoutmaster to insure the guest is factored in the planning for logistic support. A permission slip authorizing the guest to attend the event and a medical release form authorizing emergency treatment will be required from the parent or guardian.

Non-adult female guests under 18 will be permitted on overnight camping trips provided they have parental permission and on-site supervision by parents of at least one of the parties. Under no circumstance will unmarried male and female campers share tents. If there are female guests, one adult leader must be a female, 21 years of age or older.

## Chapter 9 Equipment

*General:* Troop 553 operates under the old adage "Take care of your gear and your gear will take care of you." Accordingly each Scout is responsible for providing his own personal camping equipment. The troop committee's responsibility is to secure adequate number of lanterns, stoves, dining flies, cook kits and other outdoor gear. The outdoor/activities chairman shall work closely with the troop quartermaster to maintain the troop's equipment with adequate repair and storage.

### Categories of Equipment:

*Personal equipment:* Includes items such as tent, pack, sleeping bag, individual cooking and eating utensils, canteen, flashlight, foul weather gear, etc. Scouts not in possession of personal equipment, safe for the conditions of an event, shall not be allowed to participate, i.e., rain or cold-weather clothing, sleeping bag suitable for the climatic conditions, etc.

*Troop equipment:* Generally limited to those items necessary to provide for group activities, special events and to support adult participation at camping trips; tarpaulins, ropes, saws, camp shovels, canoes, etc.

*Patrol equipment:* The troop will provide each Patrol the major portion of available equipment to include small group items such as chef kit, large cooking posts and pans, lantern with box, stove, propane, patrol box, dish pans, etc.

### Control of Equipment:

*Personal equipment:* Each Scout is responsible for the purchase and use of his own equipment. It is strongly recommended that individual equipment be labeled or etched with the Scout's name, initials and/or identifying mark to avoid disputes over ownership of similar items.

Troop equipment: The troop Quartermaster is responsible for storage and control of troop equipment. The troop equipment is issued to the patrol leader, assistant patrol leader or acting patrol leader and is returned to the troop Quartermaster in clean usable condition.

Patrol equipment: For use by members of the patrol. Each item shall be marked with the Patrol number and stored in the Patrol box or locker.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Committee Quartermaster: Is responsible for:

Supervising the troop Quartermaster in the responsibilities of his duties.

Providing recommendations to the troop committee on equipment purchases.

Overseeing one major project, which the troop Quartermaster may be required to perform during his tenure.

Instructing the troop in safe use of all troop equipment, filling propane bottles and fire extinguisher use.

Troop Quartermaster: Is responsible for:

Troop equipment, under the guidance of the committee quartermaster.

Ensuring that an accurate inventory of troop equipment is maintained and that equipment is stored in a clean, neat and orderly manner.

Issuing equipment for use by individuals or patrols.

Ensuring that equipment is returned in a clean and serviceable condition.

Making recommendations concerning equipment and its use to the committee quartermaster.

The patrol leader or assistant patrol leader will check out and return troop equipment used by the patrol and will assure that it is returned in a clean and useable condition.

#### Safety Considerations with Equipment:

Chemical stoves and lanterns: The troop will furnish compressed-gas (propane) stoves and lanterns for all camping trips. These items will be operated under the supervision of knowledgeable adults and in accordance with the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and the regulations of the camping trip facilities. A troop fire extinguisher shall be maintained in the immediate area of all propane equipment.

Liquid or propane fueled heaters are prohibited at troop camping functions.

Liquid or propane fueled lanterns and/or stoves, or flames of any type shall not be operated inside tents under any circumstances.

Patrol leaders, under the supervision of their assistant Scoutmaster, will hold patrol inspections for all Scouts of their patrol attending an event, prior to departing the meeting place. Concerns with serviceability of a Scout's personal gear will be brought to the attention of the Scoutmaster. Scouts not in possession of personal equipment suitable for the conditions of the event will not be allowed to participate, i.e., rain or cold weather clothing, sleeping bag suitable for weather conditions.

All axes, saws and hatchets shall be kept in an approved sheath when not in use. The Troop Quartermaster will ensure that only equipment, which has the required safety sheath, is issued.

Personal sheath knives are not authorized at any troop activity.

#### Damage to Equipment:

Willful damage to property is a violation of the Scout Law. "A Scout is trustworthy." Any Scout willfully damaging troop, patrol or personal equipment will be subject to committee disciplinary action and afforded the opportunity to replace damaged equipment.

The Troop Quartermaster under the supervision of the Adult Quartermaster will investigate accidental damage to equipment. If determined the accident was a result of negligence the negligent party shall be afforded an opportunity to replace the damaged equipment.

Gear damaged or worn through normal wear and tear will be replaced by the troop as recommended by the Adult Quartermaster.

Gear Needs for New Scouts:

A new Scout shall have a Boy Scout Handbook by his first meeting. The Scout should bring the handbook to all Scouting functions unless told otherwise by the Scoutmaster.

Uniform requirements as covered earlier. Due to the high cost of uniform items the purchase of uniforms may be spread out over several weeks. The shirt with the proper identification symbols should be the first priority.

Due to the cost of equipment the purchase should be restricted to essential items until you confirm the level of your Scout's interest in outdoor camping. The following personal equipment items will be required at some time during a Scout's career. Discuss equipment purchases with the Scoutmaster and Scout before you make expensive purchases.

Tent.

Sleeping bag rated to 20 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.

Mess kit to include plate, cup, spoon, fork and knife.

Canteen.

Backpack, frame type is suggested.

Flashlight with fresh batteries.

Toilet kit with personal hygiene items to include toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, soap, bath towel, wash cloth, deodorant, etc.

Emergency toilet paper.

Sweater/jacket/sweatshirt in fall, winter and spring.

Poncho or rain coat.

Change of socks, underwear and outer wear.

Personal first aid kit as described in the Scout Handbook.

It is Troop 553's recommendation that at least two boys sleep in every tent. This fills safety requirements and promotes working together as a patrol. The patrol leader will adhere to the desires of his patrol for tenting arrangements as much as possible. Scouts desiring to use personnel tents will be allowed to provide their own tent but must be prepared to share their tent in accordance with BSA and troop safety considerations.

Adults desiring to accompany the troop on a camping trip must be able to provide their own tents.

Later gear needs: As your Scout gets into Scouting activities he will have some additional equipment needs. An active troop will do at least 10 days and nights of camping each year. Eventually he could use hiking boots, pocketknife, rain/foul weather clothing, etc. Use your own good judgment. Only you know what you can afford. If you are planning to purchase camping equipment check with our leaders first. They have a good idea of the best type of equipment our troop uses.