

What to do when it rains

The first thing you should do when it starts to rain, or if everyone is going off-site, is to secure your tents. This means rolling down the sides (if they have been rolled up to air) and doing up all doors properly. This will at least keep all personal kit dry, as long as it is inside the tent (make sure nothing is touching the sides or poking out from underneath).

Secondly, make sure everyone and all items that matter if they get wet are under cover - it doesn't matter if the football gets left out in the rain, but it does matter if the two coats used as goalposts are. It is important to try and keep everyone as dry as possible, as cold damp Scouts are whingey Scouts.

This is then the time to decide what to do. If it looks like a fairly short shower, then it is probably better to 'stay put' until it has passed. However if it seems like it is going to be like it for the rest of the day then you may need to rearrange your programme to do an 'indoor' activity that was scheduled for another day.

If people need to go out in the rain, for whatever reason, all measures possible should be taken to keep them dry. If Scouts do not have a waterproof coat, then a simple 'drycoat' can be made but making a hole for the head and two arm-holes in a black dustbin bag - it looks silly but does the job; why not roll up a carrier bag to make a hat?!?!)

A pair of plastic beach shoes are very useful in these circumstances; it doesn't matter if plastic shoes and bare feet get wet or muddy, but trainers and socks take a long time to dry when wet. Remember that even after the rain has stopped the ground will still be wet, and if drainage is bad then it may become very muddy...

You may find that in certain areas drainage is very poor, and that rainwater will start to collect on the surface, and may even turn into a stream. If this is the case, then you may need to dig a shallow trench (4" deep, 6" wide) around tents, especially just inside the line of where the flysheet drips, to encourage water to drain away. In woodland areas, where the top surface is made up of compost ("loam") from fallen leaves (and very absorbent), you may find that just a couple of inches below the surface the ground is bone dry. If this is the case, simply scraping away the layer of loam is sufficient to stop your tents getting flooded.

If water collects on the surface, you may find that your tents start to get flooded. By simply turning over the edge of your groundsheet, you may be able to prevent the tent becoming flooded. In the top image, the water only has to be a depth of 1-2mm before it can flow over the edge of the groundsheet. However, by 'rolling' the edge of the groundsheet all the way round so the edge is underneath as in the lower image, the

natural fold of the material will raise the edge, and therefore the level that the water has to rise to (at least 6-8mm) before the tent is flooded out. Your first priority in any 'flood' situation is to remove all personal kit to a safe location, such as on tables in the marquee, or back into the minibus.

If you are camping in a 'farmers field' then you should have carefully chosen your location so as it is not in a place likely to flood. However, if you are near a river or stream that appears that it will burst its banks, remove all loose items to a safer place, and take tents down if possible, but a major river can raise its level very quickly and can cause serious difficulties.

If, however, you are on a permanent Campsite, the Warden should be able to offer you temporary facilities that will at least give you somewhere dry to sleep.

Equipment should never be put away wet, as it may rot or grow mildew.

If you have to take a tent down on to wet ground, lay the groundsheet down in the area that you are planning to 'drop' the tent on to. A plastic groundsheet can be hosed down and dried quickly at home, but drying a wet and dirty tent is a real nightmare.