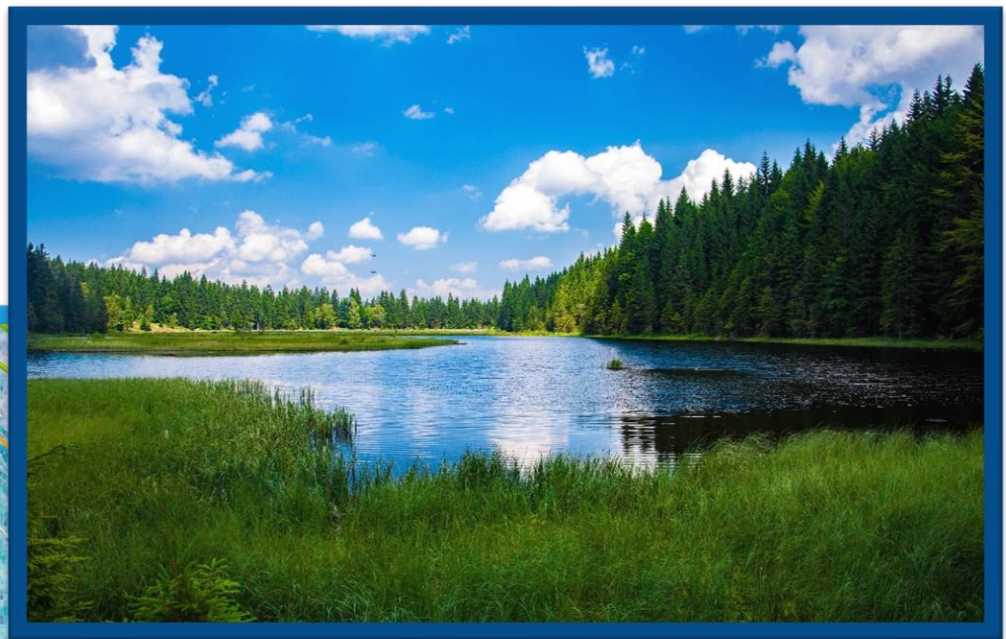




Waterfront Safety: Water Watcher Training



girl scouts 
of southern illinois



Section 1: Introduction

Why Is This Training Important?

The role of a Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSofSI) Water Watcher is NOT that of a lifeguard or boating instructor. Watchers assist the guard or instructor with participant observation and enforcing safety rules. This course is required for swimming, boating, or other water activities. The information contained in this manual, and the gsLearn course, was created to help ensure that all waterfront activities remain safe and fun for everyone. It is crucial that all safety rules and procedures are followed at all times.

How Can I Become a Council-Certified Water Watcher?

gsLearn Course & Quiz

The “Waterfront Safety: Water Watcher Training” course is available on gsLearn. You can find it in your content library. Once you have completed the course and quiz in gsLearn, you will become an officially trained council Water Watcher. This council certification is valid for 3 years and can be recertified by competing the course and quiz again on gsLearn. Remember, this certification is council-only, and may not be recognized by other outside organizations.

Paper Test & Manual

The paper test option is only available for girls (because they are not in gsLearn) or volunteers that have no access to internet & devices in their home. This manual will provide the same information as the gsLearn course, and it will be available to all volunteers on the gssofi.org website. To request the paper test, please contact Customer Care. Once you complete the paper test, and it has been graded by council, your certification will be recorded in your training record.

Important Resources

The following linked documents are available on the GSofSI website (gssofi.org) by searching for them under forms.

1. [Emergency Action Plan \(EAP\) Guide for Girl Scout Troops](#)
2. [Accident/Incident Report Form](#)
3. [Safety Activity Checkpoints \(SACP\)](#)
4. [Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois Parent Permission-Girl Health History Form](#)
5. [Adult Health History Form](#)
6. [Equipment Requisition Form](#)



Important Waterfront Safety Vocabulary

Emergency Vocab:

- **Emergency Action Plan (EAP):** A series of steps to follow in the event of an emergency.
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS):** Professional caregivers (paramedics, etc).
- **Major Emergency:** Situation requiring immediate medical care from EMS personnel
- **Minor Emergency:** Situation requiring standard first aid care from a certified adult.
- **Weather Plan:** A series of steps to follow in the event of bad weather.

Swimming Vocab:

- **Primary Lifeguard:** An adult (at least 18 years old) with current American Red Cross Lifeguard/other council-approved lifeguard certification PLUS the Waterfront Bridge or Module AND a complete understanding of the Emergency Action Plan (EAP).
- **Secondary Lifeguard:** A person (at least 16 years old) with current American Red Cross Lifeguard/other council-approved lifeguard certification PLUS Waterfront Module and instruction from the Primary Lifeguard on EAP procedures.
- **First Watcher:** An adult (at least 18 years old) instructed by the primary lifeguard in non-swimming rescues, EAP procedures, and how to spot unsafe actions, situations or distressed swimmers.
- **Other Watchers:** Person(s) at least 16 years old instructed the same as the 1st watcher.

Canoeing Vocab:

- **Primary Canoeing Instructor:** An adult (at least 18 years old) with current GSoSI Small Craft Safety-canoeing or equivalent American Canoeing Association certification.
- **Secondary Canoeing Instructor:** A person (at least 16 years old) with the same certification as the Primary Canoeing Instructor, who accompanies and assists during each canoeing/funoeing activity.
- **Whistle System:** A method of communicating with all waterfront staff and participants.
 - **1 Blast:** Attention – turn to person blowing whistle for further instructions.
 - **2 Blasts:** Buddy check. Buddies join hands and hold them in the air.
 - **3 Blasts:** Emergency Action Plan (EAP) implemented.



Watercraft Vocab:

- **Primary Sailing Instructor:** An adult (at least 18 years old) with current American Red Cross Small Craft Safety-Sailing/other council-approved sailing certification or equivalent US Sailing Association certification.
- **Secondary Sailing Instructor:** A person (at least 16 years old) with the same certification as the Primary Sailing Instructor, who accompanies and assists during each sailing activity.
- **Primary Row Boating/Paddle Boating/Stand-Up Paddle Boarding Instructor:** An adult (at least 18 years old) with current GSofSI Small Craft Safety Training **OR** Lifeguard with Waterfront Module **OR** American Canoe Association certification.
- **Secondary Row Boating/Paddle Boating/Stand-Up Paddle Boarding Instructor:** A person (16 years or older) with the same certification as the Primary, who accompanies and assists during the activity.
- **First Watcher:** An adult (at least 18 years old) instructed by the Primary Instructor on basic boating safety, use of basic rescue equipment, and how to recognize boaters/crafts in distress or unsafe actions or situations.
- **Other Watchers:** Person(s) at least 16 years old instructed the same as the 1st Watcher.



Section 2: Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

Introduction to the Emergency Action Plan

What is the Emergency Action Plan?

The Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is a plan for the reporting and care of participants and staff at council-owned waterfronts. This guide should be followed at non-council sites which lack a plan in part or in entirety. Be sure to ask the location about their emergency procedures and the contact information of the person they should report any emergencies to. During all emergencies, care must be taken not to further endanger the victim or other persons. Calm and clear action on the part of the lifeguards and/or instructors is critical.

The EAP is to be followed in the event of a major emergency. A major emergency is defined as one requiring immediate medical care (i.e. Paramedics, EMTs, ambulance). Examples of a major emergency include, but are not limited to: near drowning, unconscious victim, severe bleeding, cardiac arrest, suspected major fractures, severe head injury, suspected spinal injury, obstructed airway, seizure in the water, critical burns, and sudden illness like fainting, stroke, heart attack, heat stroke, or diabetic emergency.

Minor accidents such as cuts, bruises, abrasions, etc., are not covered by the EAP. Lifeguard(s) and Instructor(s) should follow standard first aid procedures. Minor first aid may be given by the troop/group first aider or during events by the event first aider.

Who needs to know the details of the EAP?

All waterfront staff (lifeguards, canoeing, funyaking/kayaking, sailing, paddle boating, stand-up paddle boarding (SUP) and row boating instructors and watchers) must review the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and designate which individuals are to implement the EAP before opening the waterfront for activities. Agreement must be made among all the waterfront personnel regarding their roles in the EAP should a major emergency occur. Speak with the ranger/site manager before starting your waterfront activities and secure their emergency contact information.

Safety Activity Checkpoints (SACP): EAP Information Excerpt

The Girl Scout motto is "Be prepared.", and proper preparation is the key to success. An important thing to consider ahead of time, before taking girls out on a trip or to an activity, is an Emergency Action Plan. Volunteers can review their troop's Emergency Action Plan with girls as a learning experience for them, to the extent it makes sense according to their age and maturity.



For the adult volunteer, however, it is important to think about and document an emergency action plan in the event of an emergency or injury. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as physical injury to a girl, severe weather, fire, intruder, missing girl or sudden illness. This simple step is invaluable. The key elements included in an effective risk management plan are:

- **Identify:** the type of emergency:
 - Medical: a member becomes suddenly ill
 - Accidental injury: a member is hurt during an activity
 - Weather related crisis or challenging environment as with backpacking
 - Pay attention to weather so that the activity can be rescheduled if there is a severe storm or weather-related risk.
 - Fire: become aware of all entrances and exits, and alternative routes out
 - Missing or lost member.
- **Mitigate:** minimize the damage, injury or time element in seeking help. Make sure to know how far the activity is from the closest Emergency Medical Service (EMS).
 - If EMS is more than 30 minutes away, an Advanced First Aider should always be present with girls, preferably with Wilderness First aide (WFA) or Wilderness First Responder (WFR) credentials.
 - If EMS is less than 30 minutes away, a General First Aider should be present with girls.
 - If more than 200 people at an event, an Advanced First Aider should be added to the General First Aider for every 200 girls.
 - Make sure that emergency response vehicles can access the area where you are practicing an activity with girls. If an emergency vehicle cannot access the site, notify either local EMS or parks services or other authorities ahead of time of where you will be, what you will be doing and how many members are with you.
- **Respond:** having confirmed the properly trained first aiders are present...
 - Immediately engage the first aider to the accident scene involving an illness or injury
 - Notify and coordinate the arrival of emergency medical services or law enforcement.
 - Contact all relevant parties:
 - Parents or legal guardians
 - Council staff
 - Law enforcement
 - Property owner or facility manager

Some key components of an effective Emergency Action Plan include:

- **Contact List:** A chart, table, or simple list for all participants, including adults, with parent and legal guardian contact phone numbers as well as



key emergency phone numbers, in addition to 911, such as the nearest hospital, medical center, law enforcement, and emergency transportation.

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** A pre-determined and established emergency role assignment, who does what. For example, the leader stays with girls or the injured girl(s) while the co-leader calls for help and coordinates the arrival of emergency help and notifies the parents, or vice versa. Agree on this ahead of time so that you are calm and prepared if the worst occurs. Also think through what you will do if the injured person is one of the adults.
- **Exit Strategy:** Become aware of all emergency exits and/or evacuate plans beforehand. Identify and communicate alternative exit routes.
- **Evacuation Meeting Place:** Determine and communicate a pre-agreed meeting place in case the group becomes separated, or a girl should become lost.
- **Communication Method:** Have a method of emergency communication that works. If camping or backpacking, consider a whistle or horn as an emergency call out. Make sure to inform girls that this is the sound of an emergency. When girls hear this sound, they know to gather to designated spot. If there is cell service at the activity site, save all contact names and numbers, including those for the appropriate authorities, in your mobile phones ahead of time before the activity takes place.
- **Activity Preparation:** Communicate with your Girl Scout council and girls' parents/guardians about the activity, including details about safety precautions and any appropriate clothing or supplies that may be necessary. Follow council procedures for activity approval, certificates of insurance, and guidelines about girls' general health examinations. Girls are key to activity planning. Keeping their grade level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.
- **Review Activity-Specific Safety Checkpoints with Instructors:** These checkpoints should be reviewed with the vendor, facility, camp, or your council as appropriate to determine if the safety checkpoints can be complied with. Take any questions or issues with safety compliance to your council for guidance and next steps.
- **Itinerary and Key Contacts:** Give an itinerary to a contact person at home. Call the contact person upon departure and return. Create a list that includes girls' parent/guardian contact information, council contacts, and emergency services contacts. Keep this list on hand or post in an easily accessible location. Emergency and parent contact information should be saved to an adult's mobile phone on the trip and be provided to the contact person at home.
- **Safety Gear:** Safety gear includes clothing and equipment girls will need to safely take part in the activity. These items are necessary to ensure safety. Always opt to take the safety equipment offered by an organization or facility, even if it is not specifically listed here. If the facility offers helmets,



always accept the use of helmets for girls.

- **Required Gear:** Required gear simply means the activity-specific gear that girls must have to participate in the activity. For example, skiing – a girl will need to bring or rent skis and poles.
- **Additional Gear:** Additional gear may include items that support a safe and healthy outdoor learning experience. These are items that often make the experience with girls more comfortable. Recommended items, based on Girl Scout experience, include:
 - Layers of clothing for wintertime or for activities on or by the water or mountains, where temperatures or wind can change dramatically within a short period of time.
 - Sunglasses, sunscreen, hat, sun visor, and lip balm.
 - Change of clothes for water-related activities or those involving dirt or mud, such as spelunking.
 - Comfortable shoes and socks if hiking or spending long days outside in order to prevent ticks and blisters.
 - Watch, compass, maps.
 - Insect repellent.
 - Towels for waterfront, pool, and paddling activities.
 - Bottle of drinking water, healthy snacks.
 - Backpacks—girls carry their own gear and supplies!

Always take additional gear into consideration when planning an outdoor activity or trip in addition to the safety gear required for the specific activity.

- **Instructor Credibility:** Verify instructor knowledge, experience, and maturity. Ensure the volunteers or on-site instructors possess the proper skill set, knowledge, training and certification, or documented experience required to meet your council’s guidelines and as outlined in the specific approved activity. With respect to instructing and safeguarding children, maturity level and years of experience can positively impact the support needed for volunteers to safeguard girls. For example, while the legal definition of an adult lifeguard is 18, qualified lifeguards of 21 years of age are preferred whenever possible.



The Steps of a Waterfront EAP

The following steps should be done in order in the event of an emergency.

1. Immediate attention, care and action is provided by the lifeguard/instructor closest to the emergency.
2. All other lifeguards/instructors and watchers are alerted in accordance with the whistle system and physical gestures indicating the site of the emergency. (3 whistle blasts indicates the EAP is enacted)
3. Determination is made by the Primary Lifeguard/Instructor as to whether EMS personnel are to be contacted.
4. A designated adult goes to the phone and makes the following calls: (#1) Call 911 and stay on the line to describe the situation. Give the location address and phone number and wait until the dispatcher hangs up. (#2) Call the Site Manager/Onsite Personnel to inform them of the emergency situation (another designated adult may call if the dispatcher says to stay on the line). Talk to the Site Manager/Onsite Personnel during check-in to find out their contact information. (#3) Call GSofSI at 1-800-345-6858 and follow the instructions to report an emergency. If after hours, select option 3.
5. A designated adult goes to the location's main entrance to meet the EMS personnel/police and direct them to the emergency site.
6. Other lifeguards/instructors and watchers not involved with caring for the victim(s) are responsible for clearing the water and assembling all participants in a designated area away from the immediate site of the emergency. When all individuals are accounted for, all are escorted away from the waterfront area until further notice.
7. The victim should be moved only if the situation is unsafe. The lifeguard/instructor continues to provide necessary first aid, and/or CPR if needed, for the victim and stays with them until EMS personnel arrive. If the victim is a child, the responsible adult (leader or parent) should stay with the child and go with the victim if EMS deems transportation to a hospital is needed.
8. If the victim is conscious and able, the lifeguard/instructor should gather information from the victim about what happened. This information is important for the completion of the incident report.
9. When EMS personnel arrive at the scene, care of the victim should immediately be transferred to them.



10. Once the victim is stabilized, have a designated adult call the victim's personal emergency contact.
11. If a fatality has occurred, and the police did not respond with the EMS personnel, be sure the Camp Ranger/Site Manager or the designated adult contacts them immediately.
12. Do not make any statements orally or in writing which could be interpreted either as an assumption of guilt or rejection of responsibility for the emergency.
13. Refer all media (press, TV, radio) inquiries to the GSofSI Communications Department at 1-800-345-6858.
14. Do not discuss the incident, release names, place any blame, or accept liability.
 - a. Do not call the media and do not make statements to them.
15. The Primary Lifeguard/Instructor discusses with the onsite personnel if the reopening of the waterfront is possible or even appropriate.
16. Begin a written narrative, recording the nature and exact time of the accident and all events thereafter.

Waterfront Communication

Here is an example of efficient waterfront communication:

A service unit event, including canoeing and swimming activities, will take place at the same time between the hours of 1pm-4pm. There are 60 girls and 22 adults at this event.

- The Primary Lifeguard and Primary Canoeing Instructor meet together with their watchers to discuss the EAP and who will be responsible for which duties should an emergency arise.
- The Primary Lifeguard assigns specific duties and stations for all waterfront watchers assisting with swimming activities for each session.
- The Primary Canoeing instructor assigns specific duties for all waterfront watchers involved in canoeing activities for each period.
- All waterfront staff understand the EAP and their specific duty. All activities begin after the instructors review waterfront regulations and the EAP with their respective participants.



Section 3: Swimming Rules & Safety

Swimming Rules & Safety

For starters, lifeguards must have American Red Cross (or council approved substitute) Lifeguard, CPR Professional Rescue, and First Aid. If you are planning to use the waterfront at a lake/pond, lifeguards need the “Waterfront Module/Bridge” certification. This training is available through the American Red Cross or through some YMCAs. Read all of the bullet points below to learn about the other swimming rules.

- Swimming is only permitted during daylight hours at the designated swimming areas. Rules at non-council sites should be followed.
- The Primary Lifeguard has the authority to determine all swimmers’ abilities.
- Wear sunscreen.
- Have drinking water available at the waterfront, and encourage girls, and adults, to drink plenty to avoid dehydration.
- Even if swimming at a backyard pool or hotel pool, the lifeguard ratio must be followed.
- Keep a first aider at the waterfront when girls are doing activities. Collect Health Histories and Parent Permission forms before the event; give the health histories to your first aider.
- Your Primary Lifeguard, Secondary Lifeguard(s) and watchers must be on duty at all times girls are at the waterfront.
- Use a “feet first” entry when entering the water.
- Stay out of the water if you are cold, tired or overheated. Watch girls for the dangerous “too’s”: too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, and too much strenuous activity.
- Swimmers must be in buddies when they are on the waterfront. If one girl needs to use the restroom or leave the waterfront, she must inform the lifeguard and take her buddy with her. This way the lifeguard knows there are “minus 2” in the water to adjust their headcount. Remind the girls to check back in with the lifeguard upon return so they can adjust their count again to the full number of people in the water.
 - **Important:** Buddies should be chosen after the swim test, since they have to have the same swimming ability. Buddy checks should be performed at least once an hour.
- When scheduling your waterfront swim time, keep in mind the time required for the introductions and swim test (about 20 minutes). Also, Lifeguards and watchers must have a 10 minute break



between hour long sessions. This is mandated by the American Red Cross.

- If girls split up in groups at water parks, there should be enough watchers for each group.
- Girls must slide in a seated position – never head first.
- NO running or diving at water parks.
- Water parks and pools must have a certificate of liability on file at the council office before you take your troop to it.
- Girls with limited swimming ability are encouraged to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved lifejacket.

Swimming Ratio Table

Swimmers	Lifeguards	Watchers
1-10	1 Adult	1 Adult
11-25	1 Adult	2 (1 Adult)*
26-35	2 (1 Adult)*	3 (1 Adult)*
36-50	2 (1 Adult)*	4 (2 Adults)*

*May be a person who is under the age of majority (18 years) but cannot be under 16 years of age. At no time may the number of adult waterfront staff be less than the number of minor waterfront staff.

Swimming Equipment Required:

Ring buoy and a shepherd’s crook must be placed on the deck or dock. The backboard must be placed on the beach next to the rescue board. Lifeguards must wear swimsuits, a whistle, and a rescue hip pack containing a quick seal mask and other first aid materials. Rescue tubes should be carried as well. When requisitioning watercraft from council, the necessary rescue equipment will be automatically sent. If you are renting watercraft from another venue, but still need some/all of the rescue equipment, please fill out and submit an equipment request form a minimum of 10 days prior to needing the equipment. The safety equipment is listed on the equipment requisition as “Lifeguarding Equipment”.

Whistle System

1 Blast: Attention – turn to person blowing whistle for further instructions

2 Blasts: Buddy check. Buddies join hands and hold them in the air.

3 Blasts: Emergency Action Plan (EAP) implemented.



Swimming In Deep Water

All swimmers wishing to enter deeper water must take the deep-water swimming test administered by the lifeguard. The Primary Lifeguard has the authority to determine all swimmers' abilities.

The deep-water test consists of some or all of the below components:

1. Jump into water that is over the swimmers' head and return to the surface.
2. Swim 50 yards unassisted and without rest. Swimmer must maintain positive body position (legs should not drop past 45-degree angle) for the entire distance. Start swimmers at the deep end and travel to the shallow end (if they tire they may be able to stand).
3. Tread water for one minute, turn on their back, float briefly, then swim (either on front or back) to the dock/beach and exit the water unassisted.

Your Primary Lifeguard will choose the appropriate test. A good way to identify swimming abilities while girls are in the water is to hand out colored wristbands to signify beginners, intermediate, and advanced swimmers. The bands must then be worn the entire time the individual intends to swim.

Recognizing A Swimmer in Trouble

Sometimes it is difficult to recognize a swimmer in trouble versus a child just playing. Here are some quick tips to help you identify a distressed swimmer:

- You may notice the child is not making any progress moving forward or backward.
- The child may be shivering uncontrollably, or lips may be slightly blue in color.
- A child may be wide-eyed, bobbing up and down with their arms flailing.
- Child is wide eyed, struggling to breathe or gulping water, is unable to call out for help.

In many cases, a child is having too much fun to notice that she is in trouble. If you notice any of the above signs, alert the lifeguard, have the child dry off and take a break.

If a girl has lost her swimming buddy in the water, the lifeguard must be notified, and swimming suspended until the child is found. If a girl needs to stop swimming to use the restroom or get a drink, as a watcher, you will need to inform the lifeguard that they are "minus 2" since both the girl and her buddy will be leaving the water.



Basic Swimming Test – Documented Verification of Completion

Swim tests are required for each Girl Scout every year if they are participating in any type of aquatic activities including, but not limited to: pool activity, canoes, stand up paddleboards, etc. During resident camp, swim tests are conducted at the beginning of each week to assess a camper’s swimming ability even if they have participated in one throughout the year. This test will be used when completing any paperwork asking for a swim level. Please keep in mind girls participating in summer resident camp will still need to complete a swim test upon arrival and note that some activities may require a more advanced test.

Participants will complete the following requirements to the best of their ability; Instructor, please check the appropriate level and complete the information below:

- Tread water for 2 minutes while keeping their head above water.
 - Swim a minimum of 20 yards in one direction without stopping. Using front crawl (freestyle) while keeping their face in the water and without touching the ground or holding onto the wall.
- Beginner/Non-Swimmer: This swimmer cannot successfully demonstrate or complete the above requirements. A beginner swimmer is only allowed in shallow water or where they can stand comfortably. Non-swimmers must wear a Coast-Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD/lifejacket) at all times.
- Intermediate Swimmer: This swimmer can successfully demonstrate the above requirements in shallow or calm deep water but is considered a cautious swimmer or a swimmer who is not very strong. Coast-Guard approved flotation devices (PFD/lifejacket) are optional (unless required by activity) but it is not recommended that anyone at this level participate in high risk swimming/aquatic activities.
- Proficient Swimmer: This swimmer can successfully demonstrate the above requirements in shallow or deep water, they display strong swimming skills and may participate in most high-risk swimming/aquatic activities. Coast-Guard approved flotation devices (PFD/lifejacket) are not required (unless required by activity).

The following participant (name) _____ has earned the above checked swim level on the following date: _____. This is valid for one year.

Facilitator Signature: _____ Date: _____



Section 4: Wading Rules & Safety

Wading Basics

Wading can be a great way to cool off, part of an ecological activity, or a part of a fishing trip. No matter the reason for wading, it is important to follow the wading rules to ensure everyone stays safe and has fun!

- When participating in water-based activities, instructors must provide a copy of their certification to Customer Care. Adults with Waterfront Safety: Water Watcher Training Certification must present a copy of their certification to Customer Care.
- The rules of any property that Girl Scouts visit (in addition to those stated in Safety Activity Checkpoints and GSofSI Waterfront Safety) apply. If there is no lifeguard present, girls cannot swim. If there is a boating instructor present, girls may wade.
- Troops may be on the waterfront only if they have a certified boating instructor or lifeguard and an adult with Waterfront Safety Training. No swimming without a lifeguard. Wading as a part of a boating activity only requires a certified boating instructor and Water Watchers. For this purpose, wading is defined as water that is below the knee of the shortest girl.

Wading Above the Knee

Wading above knee-deep requires the presence of a first aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue/ other council-approved rescue certification. Ensure that all girls and adults wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III). The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

Wading Below the Knee

While wading (up to knee-deep), the presence of a first aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue/other council-approved rescue certification is recommended, but not required. However, Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.



Wading Below the Ankle

If girls are participating in an ecological activity that involves being in a stream or creek where the water does not go over the ankle, adults must be present (Standard Safety Guidelines ratios listed below) but do not need any additional water certifications. They must have current CPR/First Aid.

For Outings, Activities, Travel and Camping, the adult-to-girl ratio means a minimum of two registered, approved, adult volunteers who are unrelated, including one female, for up to this number of girls:

- 6 Girl Scout Daisies
- 12 Girl Scout Brownies
- 16 Girl Scout Juniors
- 20 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 24 Girl Scout Seniors
- 24 Girl Scout Ambassadors

There should be one extra registered, approved, adult volunteer for every additional:

- 1-4 Girl Scout Daisies
- 1-6 Girl Scout Brownies
- 1-8 Girl Scout Juniors
- 1-10 Girl Scout Cadettes
- 1-12 Girl Scout Seniors
- 1-12 Girl Scout Ambassadors



Section 5: Weather Safety

Lighting & Severe Weather

Lightning: If lightning is seen or heard...

- All craft are recalled from the lake.
- Swimmers are out of the water.
- Assemble waterfront participants on the dock/off of the sand until all are accounted for.
- All waterfront participants seek shelter away from the waterfront and activities are suspended until storm, lightning and thunder have ceased.

See the info-graphic from ALLTEC below.

DO'S AND DONT'S

of Lightning Safety

DO crouch low to the ground with as little of your body touching the ground as possible if caught outside without shelter.

DO stay away from concrete floors or walls. Concrete often houses metal wires and bars that lightning can travel through.

DO avoid open areas. You want to avoid being the tallest object in the area.

DO spread out if with a group of people. This decreases the chance of multiple casualties.

DO pay attention to the weather. If able, head indoors when lightning seems imminent.

DO stay in a safe location for 30 minutes past the last rumble of thunder you can hear.








DON'T wash dishes or take a bath/shower. Water is an excellent conductor of electricity!

DON'T lie on the ground to avoid lightning. If lightning strikes nearby you want as little of your body to come in contact with the ground current.

DON'T ignore thunder. If you can hear it you are in danger. Lightning often strikes as far as 10 miles away from a storm's heavy rainfall.

DON'T stand under or near isolated tall trees, towers, or utility poles. Lightning will strike taller objects in an area.

DON'T use electrical equipment or corded phones during an electrical storm.

DON'T swim or participate in water sports during thunderstorms. Head inside until it is safe.












Severe Weather:

If tornado or funnel like clouds are seen or an emergency siren is heard...

- All craft are recalled from the water.
- Swimmers are out of the water.
- Seek shelter under the deck, in an equipment shelter or other designated spot.
- Account for all participants and personnel.
- Wait until emergency passes.

A watch is used when the risk of a hazardous weather has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location or timing is still uncertain.

WATCH

VS

WARNING

A warning is issued when a hazardous weather or hydrologic event is occurring, imminent or likely. A warning means weather conditions pose a threat to life or property



Section 6: Watercraft Safety

General Watercraft Safety Rules

This section contains important rules and procedures that apply to all watercraft. These general rules should be followed no matter which watercraft you and your girls use.

Universal Watercraft Rules

1. **PFD's:** Everyone, with the exception of lifeguards and instructors (although it is best to lead by example), must wear U.S. Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs). Everyone must wear lacing tennis shoes or close-toed water shoes that will not slip off during activities.
2. **Buddies:** Buddies should be paired based on their skill level with that specific type of watercraft and its required operational components. For example, one experienced canoe-paddling-buddy is partnered with an inexperienced buddy.
3. **Watercraft Types:** Small crafts other than canoes, stand-up paddle boards, sailboats, kayaks/funyaks, paddle boats, and row boats are not permitted.
4. **Rescue Canoe:** A rescue canoe equipped with rescue tube, extra PFDs, paddles, a throw rope, and first aid kit should be readied before instructing girl participants.
5. **Required Certification:** To use any water vessels, you must have a valid certificate in any of the following: GSofSI Small Craft Safety Training, lifeguarding (from a council approved provider) **or** American Canoe Association Small Craft Safety (canoe, sail, kayak, and row boat) certification.
6. **Selecting A Site:** Select a safe site. Don't row in unknown areas; know the locations of all shipping channels. Rowing is not permitted farther than one mile from the nearest shore. Make sure of the following:
 - o Busy channels are avoided when possible and crossed carefully when necessary, at a 90-degree angle to the channel traffic.
 - o Surf zones and areas with standing waves are avoided.
 - o On long passages, boats are close enough together so that a group decision can be made if wind and water conditions change.
 - o You are aware of possible changes in water level, due to tides or dam releases, and how these affect water conditions.



General Safety Reminders

Prior to launching small crafts, the Primary Instructor is responsible for teaching and reviewing the following with all participants:

- Making sure all crafts, rescue equipment and first aid kits are complete.
- Introducing themselves and all persons assisting them to participants and describing their roles.
- A review of the waterfront safety rules, whistle system, weather plan and system for recalling craft.
- Choosing correct size paddles and correct fitting PFDs, checking shoes.
- Basic strokes, entering and exiting the craft, boundaries, lanes of passage to and from the beach and safe carry.

Whistle System

1 Blast: Attention – turn to person blowing whistle for further instructions

2 Blasts: Buddy check. Buddies join hands and hold them in the air.

3 Blasts: Emergency Action Plan (EAP) implemented.

Storage Instructions

When not in use in the water, all watercrafts should be put away as instructed by the owner/leaser of the craft. If renting equipment from a vendor at a location, make sure you ask about the return/storing instructions. If requisitioning GSofSI owned watercraft, discuss delivery, pick up, and care/storage instructions with the council staff person handling your requisition.

Waterfront Rules

1. Do not stand up in the watercraft.
2. Avoid colliding with other watercraft, the dock, or rocks and branches.
3. Keep all canoes and equipment away from the swimming area.
4. Keep your PFD on at all times.
5. Maintain 3 points of contact with the watercraft at all times and keep your weight low.
6. Participants must wear lacing tennis shoes or closed-toed water shoes that will not slip off during activities.
7. Never let the blade of your paddle rest on the ground.



Canoe Waterfront Safety

All persons are permitted regardless of swimming ability to participate in canoeing.

- Girl Scout Daisies may only be **passengers** in canoes.
- At the discretion of the Primary Canoeing Instructor, up to 3 persons may be in a canoe, with the 3rd person seated in the middle of the canoe on the floor. Funoes hold no more than 2 persons. Funyaks hold only 1 person. Standing or changing places in the craft while on the lake is not permitted. Switching places can only be done when the canoe is docked or beached and adults are available to help.
- When scheduling your canoe time, make sure you leave enough time for introductions, set up and take down of the equipment, discuss the general watercraft rules, discuss the safety rules, discuss these craft specific rules, and time to review.

Note: Purposely tipping canoes is permitted only in summer and in the following circumstances:

- Instructional classes
- Badge requirements for Girl Scouts Cadettes Seniors and Ambassadors

Canoeing Ratio Table

Canoeing	Grade Level	Participant-to-Instructor Ratio	Required Certification (must have one current certification from list below)
Flat, near shore, no current	D, B, J, C, S, A <i>Daisies permitted Only as a passenger with an adult in their canoe, unless with an ACA accredited camp in compliance with ACA standards</i>	6:1, or 12:1 with qualified assistant <i>(ACA accredited camps adhere to all ACA standards for Daisies in canoes)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Canoe Association (ACA) Canoe Level 1 Instructor or higher • ACA Paddle Sports Safety Facilitator in canoeing • GSofSI Small Craft Safety • ARC/other council approved Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module; or an instructor with the demonstrated equivalent experience in line with these credentials.



Sailing Waterfront Safety

- A Primary Sailing Instructor and one other adult must be on duty during the entire sailing session.
- Only Girl Scout Juniors – Girl Scout Ambassadors may participate in sailing.
- A rescue canoe equipped with rescue tube, extra PFDs, paddles, a throw rope, and first aid kit should be readied before instructing participants.
- Sailors must wear lacing tennis shoes that will not slip off during activities.

Note: When scheduling your sailing time, make sure you leave enough time for introductions, to discuss the general watercraft rules, to discuss the safety rules, to discuss these craft specific rules, and time to review.

Sailing	Grade Level	Participant-to-Instructor Ratio	Required Certification (must have one current certification from list below)
Water type based on experience level.	J, C, S, A *Very mature Brownies may also sail.	The instructor-to-girl ratio is 1 to 4. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction.	Sailing Instructor Or Sailing Counselor by U.S. Sailing Or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience according to your council's guidelines. The instructor-to-girl ratio is 1 to 4. In addition, follow the adult-to-girl ratios listed in the introduction. *Thoroughly verify Brownie maturity level for sailing.



Row Boating & Paddle Boating Waterfront Safety

- *Girl Scout Daisies may use basic row boats only if they have an adult in the boat with them. Daisies can only be passengers in paddleboats if they cannot reach the pedals while sitting upright.

Row Boating / Paddle Boating	Grade Level	Participant-to- Instructor Ratio	Required Certification (must have one current certification from list below)
Flat Water - No Current	*D, B, J, C, S, A	12:1 Plus one Watcher/Helper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Red Cross (ARC) Small Craft Safety Certification-Rowing • ARC Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module • GSofSI Small Craft Safety Training



Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP) Waterfront Safety

- Inflatable SUP's are available to rent from the council; please refer to additional instructions and safety check points that comes with each board to avoid misuse of equipment. There are a limited quantity of SUP'S, and requisitions are on a first come, first served basis.
- Remember to report any broken equipment to council immediately after use.

Standup Paddle Boarding (SUP)	Grade Level	Participant - to - Instructor Ratio	Required Certification (must have one current certification from list below)
Flat Water - No Current	J, C, S, A Not recommended for D & B	5:1, or 10:1 with qualified assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSofSI Small Craft Safety Training • American Canoe Association (ACA) SUP Instructor Level 1 or higher • ACA Paddle Sports Safety Facilitator-SUP • Completed a “boat education paddle sports course” for your state • American Red Cross Lifeguarding with Waterfront Module • ACA SUP Yoga endorsement or equivalent for yoga on flat water.



Section 7: Next Steps

Waterfront Safety: Water Watcher Training Test

Now that you have read through this manual, it is time for you to complete the accompanying test. Feel free to use the manual to help you complete the test, and don't forget to double check you have answered all the questions.

Submitting the Test

Once you have completed the test, please email a copy of it to Customer Care so that it can be graded by a staff member. If you do not have an email account, contact Customer Care to work out an alternate way of submitting the completed test for marking.

Course Evaluation

We would love to hear your feedback. Please use your phone's camera QR reader or use your QR code reader app to access our online evaluation. Don't have a smartphone? No problem! Visit www.gsfsi.org > Volunteer > Adult Training to access the evaluation from your desktop.

