



Community Clean Ups

Activity Permitted for: See *Specific Project Guidelines* below.

Council Approval: Required as per Council Policy P1; [Activity/Trip Permission \(2129\)](#)

Vendor Approval: Not Required

Required Training: 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights (gsLearn)

About Community Clean Ups

Community cleanups can include Adopt-A-Highway programs, beach or river cleanups, park, or natural area cleanups. They may be organized by the troop or be part of a community-wide service project. While doing this type of community service, you must be aware of the hazards and educate the girls and adults involved.

Note: Cleanups that are part of a larger sustainable project may qualify as a Take Action project for the girls to complete a Journey.

Community Clean Ups: General Guidelines

- Always check to see if permission is required from the property owner or government agency.
- Hard sole, closed toe, and closed heel shoes are required.
- If cleanup is done in an area of vegetation higher than your shoes, long pants and long-sleeved shirts are required to protect against insects, hazardous plants, vegetation, etc.
- Adult watchers should have a communication plan using two-way radios or cell phones.
- All adult watchers must carry an emergency warning device, air horn, or whistle.
- An Emergency Action Plan must be created for the event to include communication plans, and all participants should practice the plan before the cleanup.
- Clean Ups are planned during daylight hours, never at night. Light reflective gear is helpful even during daylight hours particularly on overcast days.
- Permission Forms. Cleanup projects require additional information included on permission forms. Parents must give expressed permission for the event after having received specific instructions including information on the location and environmental conditions.
- In the case of roadway clean-ups, the permission slip must also include how close to the roadway the girls will be working (for example, girls will work no closer than within 10 feet of the roadway's shoulder) as well as the time duration.

Specific Project Guidelines

Beach Cleanup (Daisies and above)

- Do not enter the water deeper than 6 inches without an adult trained in Basic Water Rescue or a lifeguard present.
- Hard sole, closed toe and heel water shoes may be used in place of regular shoes.

Public Parks, Community Cleanups (Daisies and above)

- Call ahead to determine if any permissions or specific permits are necessary.
- Ensure the safety of the grounds and security of the area by choosing a location that is in a public space with human traffic activity (not remote).
- Do not enter any bodies of water such as lakes or large ponds without a waterfront trained lifeguard present.

River or Waterway Cleanups (Brownies and above)

- Do not enter the water on rivers or waterways due to potential unstable bank conditions without a waterfront trained lifeguard present.
- Stay away from swift moving water.

Highway/Road Cleanups (Cadettes and above)

- Speed limits cannot exceed 40 mph. Participants cannot work in or around high-risk areas such as bridges, overpasses, medians, roundabouts, steep slopes.
- Contact the owner or government agency (such as the State Department of Transportation) for permission. Many states and local governments have specific guidelines and safety rules to follow. Some states have safety videos for highway cleanups.
- All participants should work facing traffic.
- All participants wear bright clothing or light reflective gear, especially on overcast days.
- Stay away from rural and winding two lane roads and highways.
- Adult watchers are safety observers at the event. They do not participate in cleaning the area; they observe the roadway and participants to identify hazards and activate emergency warnings to avoid danger.
- An adult watcher should stand ahead of the group facing traffic to flag cars to slow down. At least one adult watcher should be at the front and one at the back of the group. If the two adult watchers cannot keep each other in sight, additional adult watchers are required. Use of air horns should be considered to activate an emergency response.
- Adult watchers must carry an air horn as an emergency warning device.
- Use cones or large bright sign to indicate clean-up in progress.

Learn More

Adopt-A-Highway: Contact your state Department of Transportation. Many have safety tips, rules and regulations or videos. If your state does not have specific laws concerning adopt-a-highway and community clean-ups, reference another state. For example, [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Adopt a Highway Safety](#)

Understand that waste products on the side of the road and in parks have the potential to be hazardous or poisonous. Research what those may be. The video below is provided by the Colorado Department of Transportation.

- [Meth Lab Waste Recognition](#): Playing time: 7:52 video courtesy of Colorado Department of Transportation

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Ensure state laws that are specific to children with special needs are adhered to. For example, the visual or hearing impaired may require very specific laws or guidelines. For more information visit [Inclusion of persons with Disabilities in Service Days and Events](#).

Equity. In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities, consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Infectious Disease Guidelines. Girl Scouts use a commonsense approach to health and safety. Before participating in Girl Scouting activities, members are to undergo health checks at home for any symptoms such as fever of 100.4 (or need for fever-reducing medications) chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, stomach aches, nausea, or vomiting. Members with any of these symptoms or in need of fever-reducing medication **MUST** stay home until fully recovered.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for any activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

Community Clean Up Checkpoints

Required Training: Troop/Group Program leaders must complete GSUSA's online leadership courses and GSVSC's 281 GS 201 Trips & Overnights course in gsLearn. Adult volunteer chaperones must complete GSVSC's 281 GS 104 Orientation for Support Volunteers online course in gsLearn.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for this activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, or sudden illness. The emergency action plan should include:

- Communication plans.
- Adult/girl ratios apply for the number of girls participating.
- Required adult watchers are not included in the adult/girl ratio.
- Air horns are required for use as an emergency warning device on roadways.
- Whistles or air horns may be used as emergency warning devices on beaches, parks, waterways, and other areas, not including roadways.
- Review of current COVID guidelines
- All girls and adults should know how to respond to an emergency warning device.

Girls should plan the activity. Encourage girls to plan where they want to go, their desired outcome, safety precautions, and how to deal with problems that may arise during the cleanup such as:

- Traffic
- Public interference
- Heat/cold stress
- UV radiation
- Severe weather

- Dangerous animals (snakes, foxes, alligators, jellyfish, etc.) dependent on the area you will be working in.
- Stinging/biting insects
- Poisonous/toxic plants – poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, wild parsnip
- Where collected trash will be disposed; arrangements or permissions may be required.

Be sure girls and adults have a good understanding of potentially hazardous waste they should not touch or pick up. Discuss this with them. Explain that if they see something, they should say something – to an adult. The checklist below provides examples of hazardous or dangerous materials:

- Abandoned barrels
- Antifreeze
- Any container with a RADIOACTIVE label
- Any container with liquid including soda bottles
- Broken automotive batteries
- Bulging or dented containers
- Chemical containers
- Containers leaking an unknown substance
- Containers of unidentifiable materials
- Dead animals, sea creatures
- Gas cans
- Hypodermic needles
- Unidentified liquids, powders, chemicals
- Narcotics
- Paint cans
- Pesticide/herbicide containers
- Sharp objects
- Unidentifiable containers
- Used oil
- Weapons

Prompt girls to share resources. Encourage girls to distribute a list of safety gear and supplies, and to determine which resources can be shared.

Choose an appropriate area. Consider terrain, girl safety, and public access when choosing a location to cleanup. Work with local community groups that may offer clean up days as part of a larger community beautification project. Locations are restricted to a reasonable length as determined by age, nature of the terrain, physical condition of the girls, disabilities, weather conditions, and time of day. The location should always accommodate all girls.

Assess safety of the clean-up area. Safety of the girls is of utmost concern during a cleanup. Be aware of the members of the public girls may encounter when cleaning up, traffic, and the potential hazards listed above. Consider extra safety precautions for areas where driver vision is restricted, such as curves in roads. Avoid areas with steep drop offs. Do not work or stand within 10 feet of the shoulder of the road. Follow all state Adopt-a-Highway safety rules when working along any roadsides. Ensure that the DOT (Department of Transportation) or a land management or similar agency is contacted during the planning stage to determine any restricted areas or if any permits are needed. First aider is required. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first aider with Wilderness First Aid certification.

Ensure adults have a comprehensive understanding of the trip. Group members are trained to be observant of the area, surroundings, and fatigue of individuals. Instruction is given on the safety rules, Safety Activity Checkpoints

such as staying together in a group, recognizing poisonous plants, biting or stinging insects and ticks, respecting wild animals, and behaving effectively in emergencies. Ensure that girls, based on their level, know the safety precautions.

Permission Slips. Cleanup projects require additional information included on permission slips. Parents must give expressed permission for the event including specific instructions on the location and environmental conditions. In the case of roadway clean-ups, the permission slip must also include how close to the roadway the girls will be working (for example, girls will work no closer than within 10 feet of the roadway's shoulder).

Safety Gear. The gear you will need will depend on the clean-up project, location, and weather.

- A water bottle or hydration pack with enough water for each girl for the length of the cleanup.
- Face mask
- Sturdy footwear
- Sturdy work gloves
- Safety vests
- Bright clothing
- Garbage bags
- Tongs (pick up tool)
- A working cell phone held by designated adult in case of emergencies.
- First Aid Kit

Additional Safety Gear: Roads and Highways

- Safety cones or triangles to warn drivers of workers along the road or highway.
- Red flags for adult watchers at front and back of the group.
- Airhorn for each adult watcher.