

# What are the major safety hazards in camp?



What actions can we take to prevent life threatening incidents?

*These are the major risks in camp.*

*Discuss as a team!*

- Impalement
- Drowning
- Head injury (forts)
- Lanyard strangulation
- Getting lost
- Anaphylaxis
- Heat stroke
- Shock
- Asthma Attack

## Safety and Risk Assessment

*(this is a policy that is publicly available to parents)*

One of the many benefits of allowing children to have lots of time to play freely outdoors is that they gain in self-confidence and independence, in part by taking reasonable risks and testing their limits. Our goal is to allow reasonable risk taking, balanced with watchfulness for true safety hazards. There may be age and situationally appropriate exceptions for many of the broad policies below. For example, certain kinds of climbing may be permissible for a 10 year old but not for a 5 year old.

Our teachers set the following expectations for the children:

**Climbing:** Children love to balance on logs and climb up trees! Children are permitted to climb as high as they are tall, and must be able to reach that height by themselves (teachers will not lift them up to a place that they cannot reach themselves).

**Throwing:** Children are permitted to throw sticks, acorns, and other natural objects AWAY from the group, and away from trails or other places people might be walking. Teachers will help define throwing zones when needed.

**Fire:** We will frequently gather at our fire circle. Children are taught to sit on the stumps that surround the fire. If a child or teacher needs to move to a different spot, he or she must turn their body and put their feet outside the stump circle before standing up. Campfires are closely supervised and extinguished thoroughly when not in use.

**Exploring:** Children are taught to stay within the boundaries set by teachers at all times. This typically means that children are directly in sight of a teacher, but occasionally the forest topography means a child is out of sight, but within boundaries and within voice range. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that young children do not accidentally stray from the group. Children who deliberately run from or leave the group will be asked to withdraw for safety reasons.

**Wildlife:** Children are taught to be gentle with living things and to ask a teacher before touching or picking up any wildlife they find in the woods or on the farm.

**Wild Edibles:** Teachers will explore some basic, easily identifiable wild edibles with children (wineberries, wood sorrel, and white pine needles, for example). As part of this exploration, children are taught to never eat anything from nature without permission from an adult.

**Sticks:** Playing with sticks is part of childhood. We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and swordfight with sticks. Children are taught that they must carry sticks with one end in their hand and the other end pointing down. Just like with throwing, children who wish to swing sticks are directed to find a safe space away from other people. Fantasy play, including swordfighting, is generally acceptable as long as the play does not involve physical contact and the level of imaginary violence is not distressing to children who are not involved in the game. Teachers will redirect play that crosses physical or emotional safety boundaries.

**Water:** Our explorations may take us to Wintergreen Brook, or as far as Lake Wintergreen for older children. Children are closely supervised at all times when playing in the water. Because streams may have sharp rocks or other debris, children are required to wear water shoes, closed toed sandals, or old sneakers for wading (note that rain boots are not recommended for stream wading - they are too stiff for good balance on slippery rocks).

**Temperature and Extreme Weather:** We will be outside in almost all weather! There is no standard guideline for when it is too hot or cold to be outside. Teachers will be mindful of temperature, precipitation, and wind chill, as well as of the physical and emotional state of the children. Indoor spaces will be used in the event of thunderstorms or hail.