4-H Risk Management Checklist for Winter Activities

## Risk Management

Risk management is a process of steps. These include:

1. Identify potential risks
2. Evaluate those risks
3. Determine what you can do to reduce the risks to an acceptable level
4. Continue to monitor the activity and make changes as needed

## Overview

This checklist is intended to support 4-H volunteers when groups are planning to engage in winter activities such as: downhill skiing, cross country skiing, snowboarding, tubing, hockey, ice skating, ice fishing, snowshoeing, sledding, winter shelter building, winter biking, or dog sledding. It is crucial for 4-H volunteers to share with 4-H members how important its safety is when participating in winter activities. Encourage youth to help you identify potential risks and work with you to make the environment as safe as possible for everyone engaging in the activity.

## Checklist

Please thoroughly read the checklist below each time a group is planning a winter activity. Volunteers who review and act upon these items have done due diligence within the scope of a volunteer’s duties to reduce or eliminate the potential and actual risk for participants related to the activity.

* **Key logistics of the activity**
* Communicate your plans for the activity with the 4-H program coordinator.
* Ensure that the activity is accessible to all participants.
* Provide participants and parent/ guardians with a permission slip that includes an activity itinerary and emergency phone numbers, addresses, etc.
* Consider access to restrooms. Adults should not be alone with a single youth in restrooms. Always send young children in pairs, with an adult within hearing distance.
* Ensure that adults do not have 1:1 situation with youth.
* When using fish shanties, unrelated adults/youth shouldn’t be in a 1:1 situation.
* Communicate with participants and parents/guardians about appropriate attire for the activity to ensure protection from the elements and avoidance of hypothermia.
* Cancel the activity in extreme weather conditions.
* Ensure the use of safety equipment such as helmets, flashlights, or first aid kits.
* Instruct youth on how to participate in the activity safely.
* Evaluate hazards in the area.
* **Proper Supervision**

Work with the local 4-H program coordinator to have enough current, Active Gold level volunteers to help supervise the activity. Activities require a minimum of one adult for every eight youth, depending on the age of the youth and risk of the activity. Cloverbuds (youth ages 5-7) need a minimum one adult for every six-youth depending on the risk of the activity.

* **Accident Insurance**

An annual supplemental accident insurance policy through American Income Life covers 4-H activities for all current, Active Gold volunteers in Volunteer Central and youth enrolled in 4-H Online. The exclusion of policy coverage is any “downhill” winter sports or activities which usually includes skiing, snowboarding, tubing and sledding. **For “downhill” winter sports or activities, special activities accident insurance coverage is recommended and can be purchased through American Income Life.** More information can be found at:[https://www.ailife.com/specialriskdivision/activityreport](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/www.ailife.com/specialriskdivision/activityreport__;!!HXCxUKc!nr8cdVpvrHASDiHBG407judybK3CrbDsvPJua2eFjRa2zJ_Qm3BgKJmKhX_5$)

* **Permissions for Use of Private Property/Waivers**
* If using private property, be sure to obtain permission from the landowner. They may wish to address any need for increased property insurance.
* If the facility requires a waiver to be signed, the waiver should be handled between the participant’s parent/guardian and the facility directly. Staff and volunteers must **NOT** sign any documents including contracts or agreements on behalf of a 4-H club/group or any MSU Extension 4-H program unless otherwise directed by 4-H staff.
* **Prepare for an emergency by considering:**
* Potential risks.
* Minor first aid (first aid kit).
* Access to care and medical treatment in an emergency (telephone access, list of phone numbers to call, if ski patrol is available, incident report forms).
* Two-deep leadership (at least two current, Active Gold volunteers and/or MSU Extension staff on hand). Everyone in a leadership role should know emergency plans and procedures.
* Encourage at least one adult to be trained in first aid and CPR.
* Location of nearest care facility, preferably within 30 minutes of the location/site of the activity. Name, address, and phone number for the care facility should be readily available.
* **If there is an incident, report it.**

Volunteers and staff need to record all incidents (medical, property damage, etc.) to local MSU Extension staff using an MSU Extension Injury/Property Damage Report Form. This form can be found at: <https://rmi.msu.edu/_assets/rmidocuments/InjuryPropertyDamageReport.pdf>. Volunteers are encouraged to have copies of this form on hand at all 4-H winter activities.

* **Health Form**

Through the 4-H Online registration process, a parent/guardian must complete a health form, which includes a youth medical release, prior to the child’s participation in any 4-H activity.

* **Print Documents**

Volunteers and staff must be certain that printed copies of the health form are on hand at all 4-H winter activities. Keep the documents in a confidential file or notebook and carry them with you throughout the winter activities that 4-H members take part in. The volunteers should work with the local 4-H program coordinator to review the health statements and familiarize themselves with any special medical needs of 4-H members. Discuss with parent/guardians the procedures that will be followed in the case of an incident.

* **Food**
* Follow all food safety guidelines including keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
* Maintain personal cleanliness. Encourage hand washing as often as possible.
* Utensils, food containers and surface areas are kept clean and sanitized.
* Food is used within a safe length of time or refrigerated
* Know if participants have food allergies. Plan refreshments and meals accordingly.
* Have water available.
* **Transportation**

Youth and their families are expected to arrange personal transportation to attend MSU Extension-sponsored events and activities. Staff members and volunteers should not arrange for carpooling of program participants.  
In emergency situations, a staff member or volunteer may need to provide transportation to a minor. Adults cannot be in a 1:1 situation with unrelated minors in vehicles. When possible, obtain permission from the parent/guardian of the minor and the 4-H program coordinator to transport youth due to an emergency. If contact cannot be made, the incident must be recorded and shared with the parent or guardian of the minor and the 4-H program coordinator.

* **Arrival/Departure from activity**

Utilize a sign-in sheet that all participants fill in at the time of arrival, which indicates who will be picking up the youth at departure time.  
Personal transportation to and from 4-H program activities is the responsibility of the 4-H member, parent/guardian, or volunteer. Be aware of when youth leave and who they leave with. Do not allow youth to depart with unauthorized adults. Volunteers need to remain on-site until all youth have left.

## Support

For more information contact:

**Dorothy Munn**

Policy and Risk Management Educator

[munnd@msu.edu](mailto:munnd@msu.edu)

Adapted with permission from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach; *4-H Risk Management Checklist for Meetings and Events*, 4H-3039A, April 2018, <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4h/files/page/files/riskmgmtchecklist_rev4.18.pdf>