



# Navigating Incidents: Guide for Units

Welcome to the Navigating Incidents Guide for Units, designed to equip you with the tools and steps necessary to respond effectively to unexpected situations. This guide serves as a roadmap, outlining the steps to take when faced with an incident while prioritizing safety and appropriate action.

- Step 1: Immediate Safety
- Step 2: Grasp the Full Situation
- Step 3: Document the Incident Thoroughly
- Step 4: Notify the Local Council
- Step 5: Follow Up with Care

***If immediate assistance is needed in the handling of a sexual-abuse allegation, contact Scouts First Helpline: 1-844-SCOUTS1.***

## Step 1: Immediate Safety

When an incident occurs, the safety of everyone involved takes precedence. Follow these crucial steps:

- Conduct a rapid assessment to identify potential injuries or hazards.
- Provide first aid as needed and seek medical help promptly. If necessary, contact 911 immediately.
- If the situation warrants, move individuals to a safer area to mitigate immediate risks.

## Step 2: Grasp the Full Situation

Understanding the incident in its entirety empowers you to respond effectively:

- Gather comprehensive information about what happened to establish a clear understanding.
- If minors are involved, inform parents and guardians of the situation promptly. Also include their contact information on report.



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### Step 3: Document the Incident Thoroughly

Accurate documentation is key to addressing incidents comprehensively:

- Collect all available information: document the who, what, when, where, and why. (Resource below: Incident Reporting: Gathering the Information)
- Construct a timeline that outlines the sequence of events leading up to and following the incident.
- Include the names of all individuals involved and detail the actions taken to address the situation.
- Enhance your documentation with photographs of the scene and witness statements.

### Step 4: Notify the Local Council

Staying in touch with your local Council is crucial for transparency and proper record-keeping:

- Notify Council about the incident promptly.  
<https://www.virginiaheadwaters.org/>

### Step 5: Follow Up with Care

Continuing to provide support and care after the initial response is essential:

- Maintain open communication with the families of those affected by the incident.
- Address any questions or concerns they may have and ensure they feel supported throughout.



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## Incident Reporting: Gathering Information

When unexpected incidents occur in Scouting, swift and accurate reporting is essential to safeguard the safety and well-being of everyone involved. **As a Unit, your responsibility is to promptly notify your council of any incident.** Keep in mind that the objective is to furnish your Council with clear, concise, and accurate details regarding the incident.

*To help streamline the information gathering process, here's a 10-step guide to assist you in determining what details you should share when reporting an incident.*

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### 1. Basic Information:

- **Date and time** of the incident.
- **Location** where the incident occurred (campsite, meeting place, etc.).
- **Your name and contact** information as the report filer.

### 2. Nature of the Incident:

- Clearly **define the incident** type (accident, injury, illness, property damage, behavioral concern, etc.).

### 3. Involved Individuals:

- **Names and ages of all individuals involved** (Scouts, leaders, volunteers, staff, etc.).
- **Roles and positions** within the BSA (Scout, Scoutmaster, position, etc.) & **Unit number**.
- **Contact information** for those directly involved. (If **youth**, **provide parents**.)

### 4. Description of the Incident:

- Offer a detailed and **factual** account of the incident.
- Maintain objectivity and avoid speculation or assumptions.
- Describe any actions taken before, during, and after the incident.

### 5. Witness Information:

- Names and contact information of witnesses who observed the incident.
- Their perspective on what they saw or heard.

### 6. Injuries or Damage:

- **Detail injuries**, illnesses, or property damage sustained if applicable.
- **Mention any medical treatment** on-site or subsequent medical attention sought.



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### 7. Immediate Response:

- Outline immediate actions taken to address the situation or provide assistance.
- Note response times and outcomes if emergency services were involved.

### 8. Contributing Factors:

- Identify factors that might have contributed to the incident (unsafe conditions, lack of supervision, equipment failure, etc.).

### 9. Follow-Up Actions:

- Describe post-incident actions taken to ensure safety and well-being.
- Note any communications with parents or guardians of affected Scouts.

### 10. Photos and Documentation:

- Attach incident scene photographs, images of injuries, or property damage if available.
- Include relevant documents such as incident forms, medical records, or witness statements.

## Resource: Incident Reporting Tools

*The Incident Reporting Tools provided below are customized for different situations, serving as valuable resources for gathering incident information. More than just filling out a form, these tools are crafted to assist you in accurately sharing all essential details with your Council.*

[Incident Information Reporting Tool](#): Use this tool to report injuries, illnesses, and incidents requiring medical attention beyond basic first aid. Suitable for situations occurring during Scouting activities or on council-owned properties.

[Youth Protection/Membership Infraction Information Reporting Tool](#): For reporting instances of abuse, violations of BSA policies, or inappropriate behavior involving Scouts, Scout leaders, parents, or others.

[Near Miss Incident Information Reporting Tool](#): Use this tool to report near misses – incidents that could have resulted in harm but did not. Valuable for identifying safety and program practice improvements. Near misses with clear lessons learned can bring to light opportunities to improve safety performance or program practices.