



Chapter 2 – Commuter Crew: SCA Policies and Protocols

SCA Policies for the Commuter Crew Program

As the Crew Leader of a group of teenagers, you need to be clearly in charge at all times. Your personal style of leading will determine how much decision-making you delegate to the group. But to whatever degree you may hand-off simple, daily decisions, you must never abdicate your ultimate authority and responsibility for the welfare of all participants in your group at all times.

Although we believe SCA offers a significant amount of independence and autonomy to professionals who run our programs, there are some hard and fast rules which crew leaders and volunteers must observe during an SCA program. These have been developed out of SCA's more than 50 years of experience running Crew Programs. They are designed to protect our Members, our Crew Leaders, and the organization itself. They have not been made arbitrarily, or for the sake of having rules alone. The reason for each, and its genesis, will be made clear throughout the rest of this Handbook.

These policies in no way attempt to address every situation you may encounter while leading your crew. Throughout this book you will find additional guidance and advice, but the time will surely come when you face a situation no one has anticipated. You have been hired to exercise your best judgment and to be creative in solving problems in these cases. When in doubt, use cautious, common sense as your guide and contact SCA for guidance. If you follow the policies set forth here and use your best judgment, SCA will back you **100%** when you must make a difficult decision.

Balancing SCA Policy Versus Personal Convictions

It is very possible that you may not agree with some of SCA's policies. Both Crew Leaders and full-time SCA staff hold a variety of political and philosophical convictions. SCA does not expect that you will agree with everything the organization stands for, or with every management policy our cooperating agencies follow.

We do, however, expect you to uphold SCA policies and abide by area regulations, whatever your own feelings about them. If this seems difficult, realize that SCA does not hire you to run your own program, but to run one of ours. If you feel unable to uphold SCA policies, you will need to consider withdrawing from the program. If you remain committed, despite your difference of opinion, come to terms with the issues ahead of time and think about how you will present these differences to your crew.

As you work to accomplish these substantial goals, be aware that SCA is standing behind you all the way. SCA staff are ready to help you at any time. Feel free to call on us with any problem or just to get a second opinion or some reassurance.

SCA POLICIES

While not every policy is listed below, you will find them clearly stated throughout the Commuter Crew Leader Handbook. Our goal is to get these policies out front – we want our expectations of you as leaders to uphold these policies to be clear. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the staff.

Professional Conduct

1. Crew Leaders are responsible for Crew Members at all times during the program. Crew Members should never be entrusted to another adult, except another SCA staff person (with the exemption of an emergency).
2. Crew Leaders must provide an emotionally safe environment for SCA participants, and should actively interrupt any inappropriate language use, jokes or other physical or verbal interplay that is any way sexist, racist, or is a slander toward any person or group of people.
3. Crew Leaders are forbidden to have exclusive or sexual relationships with SCA participants at any time, regardless of the participant's age.
4. Participants must refrain from exclusive or sexual relationships with each other during the entire course of the program, and it remains the Crew Leader's responsibility to assure this, even if it means dismissing a participant.
5. Crew Leaders must refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco products during SCA meetings, training classes, and for the course of the program. Leaders must also assure that SCA participants follow this policy.
6. Crew Leaders must respect and make reasonable efforts to accommodate participant's religious beliefs and customs as well as their dietary needs.
7. Any disclosure by a participant of either physical or sexual abuse must be reported to SCA staff as soon as possible.
8. No skinny-dipping or public displays of nudity are permitted.
9. All Crew Leaders are required to uphold all SCA policies and abide by the hosting area's regulations, regardless of personal views or philosophies.
10. Crew Leaders' partners and children are required to abide by SCA's policies and must be signed up as an SCA volunteer if joining the crew for more than two days.
11. Crew Members are not permitted to use cell phones or other electronic devices during the program. While participants may wish to use them during the commute to the meeting site each morning, these devices need to be turned off and kept out of site for the entire duration of the program day. Crew leaders may ask for these devices to be stored in a secure location (lock box, locked storage shed, etc.) while the crew is in session. (This is discussed further in Chapter 8: Managing Student Dynamics)
12. Pets are not permitted on SCA programs or to any SCA sanctioned event.

First Aid/General Safety

1. All Crews must have an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) with the Crew and on file in the SCA office prior to any activity in the field.
2. All Crew Leaders must distribute a copy of their ERP to their Regional Coordinator. There must be an ERP for every activity of the program – i.e. Environmental Education

Days, Recreational Trip, different work sites, etc. Often these locations are on file at the regional office.

3. An unscheduled loss of contact with a person for more than two hours is considered an emergency. If this occurs, the Emergency Response Plan should be initiated.
4. Participants may not swim without their crew leader(s) on-site, nor should Crew Leaders swim alone.
5. Shoes must be worn at all times, except for bathing, while in tents during recreational trips, and in other situations the Crew Leader(s) carefully controls. Closed toed shoes must be worn in the kitchen area and also while swimming, except when swimming in pools.
6. Crew Leaders are required to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and their Crew Members from sunburn and excessive sun exposure, including but not limited to sunscreen and protective clothing.
7. The Crew or individual Members must not be unsupervised for any length of time, except under strictly controlled circumstances dictated by the supervisor. "Solo" experiences are not part of SCA's curriculum and are not allowed.
8. A first aid kit and radio/sat or cell phone must be with the Crew and be accessible at all times. The following information must be stored in the first aid kit
 - Participant/Crew Leader medical certificates
 - Medical Response Waivers/ Emergency Contact info for each participant
 - Emergency Response Plan(s) (ERPs)
 - Blank insurance forms
 - Ball point pen and Incident Report Forms
 - Benadryl

The kit must be returned clean and with a list of items needing to be replaced. Any crew leader not returning their kit will be charged \$100.

9. No SCA Crew Leader, nor anyone else who is not properly trained and licensed, may administer any drugs, prescription or non-prescription. (Please see Chapter 11 – Risk Management for more details about administering medication to Members)
10. All injuries and illnesses, both serious and minor, must be recorded in an SCA medical log. All situations requiring professional medical care must be documented in an incident report form. Refer to Chapters 10 and 11 for more details.
11. As a Crew Leader, you are required to initiate contact with SCA staff in the event of:
 - A fatality of a participant or Leader.
 - Unexpected loss of contact of over two hours with a participant or Crew Leader, including failure to show up at designated meeting point.
 - Environmental conditions threatening the health, welfare, or safety of the Crew (forest fires, hurricanes, etc.)
 - Any ongoing search and rescue activity affecting the Crew.
 - Any visit to a medical professional of any kind (doctor, nurse, physician's assistant, clinic, hospital, EMT, etc.)
 - Early departure of a participant or Crew Leader for any reason.

- Serious differences of style or opinion between co-leaders which impact the program.
- Any conflict with the agency that impacts the program to the point of ineffectiveness, or significantly threatens the morale of the participants.
- Destruction and/or loss of equipment (including vehicles) which is critical to the safety or success of the program or Crew.
- Any vehicle accident.
- Involvement of the SCA group in an incident not involving SCA Members, but in which SCA aids or participates in rendering assistance.
- Any substantive contact a Crew Leader makes to a participant's parents or guardian regarding medical or behavioral concerns.
- Disclosure by a participant of physical or sexual abuse.
- Any situation under suitable control, but under scrutiny of the media.

Safety at Work

1. While working, all SCA Crew Members and Crew Leaders are required to wear:

- All leather (or Kevlar) boots. NO EXCEPTIONS WHILE USING TOOLS! Boots should always be worn at the work site. NO working in lightweight hiking shoes or boots (except under special circumstances – see below *).
- Hard hats when working with swinging tools, performing overhead work, felling trees or while working in close proximity to any swinging tools.
- Long pants. Like boots they should always be worn at the work site. A thin layer of fabric can deflect a blow and/or reduce injury from a stray tool swing. NO shorts are allowed at work (except under specific circumstances).

** The only exceptions for these three items might be work that doesn't involve any swinging tools, sharp tools, or overhead work (archaeology or restoration projects for example).*

- A T-shirt or sleeved work shirt is required. No modified shirt sleeves or tank tops.
- Gloves - Wearing leather gloves is mandatory while using bladed tools and while sharpening tools.
- Safety glasses - safety glasses are mandatory whenever using high impact tools (sledges, mauls, picks, etc.) that make flying particles a danger. Glasses should also be worn when metal is being struck on metal, or metal on rock. Crew Leaders will need eye protection if using power saws, chainsaws, etc.
- Ear Protection – required for working near power tools and for Crew Leaders using chainsaws.

2. Do not allow any participant to use electric saws, power augers, or winches. Participants may **not** operate chainsaws or power brush cutters at any time. Crew Members are not permitted to use electric tools or motorized vehicles of any kind.

During outdoor recreation and traveling

1. Water that is not potable must be treated and/or purified before consumption.
2. All Crew Leaders and participants are required to wash their hands with soap and water before handling any food and after using the bathroom/latrine.
3. All SCA participants and leaders must wear seat belts while riding in or driving any vehicle. (No riding in the back of a truck for example.)
4. No white water activity is permitted without written approval from the National Director of High School Programs. All snorkeling, caving, rock climbing, horseback riding must be lead by a SCA approved outfitter.
5. SCA Members and Crew Leaders must wear life jackets (personal floatation devices) when in boats of any kind.
6. When hiking or canoeing, the group needs to stay together OR stop to recollect OFTEN. If there are two crew leaders, one will lead the party while the other brings up the rear. If there is a solo Crew Leader, she/he must determine whether the terrain and group warrant a participant "Leader" while the leader brings up the rear, or vice-versa. Groups must re-gather at all trail junctions – or an area where two or more trails cross.
7. No rock climbing or glacier travel that requires ropes for protection from a fall is permitted.
8. Lightning Procedures:
 - If a safe pavilion or other covered area is available, use it!
 - Instruct participants to put on rain gear and sit out in the open rather than taking shelter in a potential spark gap "cave" or under a tree.
 - Crouch on packs (without metal frames or stays) or Ensolite pads for protection from ground currents and to minimize the distance from one body part to the other.
 - Keep your feet close together with your elbows on your knees and hands on your head.
 - Do not huddle together to wait out the storm. Instead, spread the group out.
 - Remove yourself well away from items that attract lightening, such as metal tools, backpack frames and barbed-wire fences.
9. River and Stream Crossing Procedures
 - Crew Members and leaders should never cross if it exceeds the Crew Leader's comfort level.
 - Close toed shoes or boots must be worn for all crossings.
 - Backpack waist belts and sternum straps must always be unfastened.
 - A rope must NEVER be tied or attached in any way to a person crossing swift water.

10. Every SCA Crew on an overnight activity should have basic survival gear with them during travel. Every party should have at least the following items:
 - Extra clothing and rain gear
 - Extra food and water
 - First aid kit
 - Flashlight or head lamp
 - Knife
 - Map and compass
 - Matches or lighter and candle stub or fire ribbon
 - Radio or cell phone with reception

Administrative

- 1) Crew Leaders receive a debit card and are responsible for collecting all receipts and reconciling all expenses every two weeks until the end of their program.
- 2) Crew Leaders who foresee that they will run over budget, must discuss a revised budget with their immediate supervisor.
- 3) All Crew Leaders must return the SCA Crew Leader Handbook, *Lightly on the Land*, and any borrowed field guides or other literature to SCA at the end of the program or they will be charged for replacement.

SCA Vehicle Standards

Please note: For the purpose of these Standards, the term "SCA vehicle" refers to vehicles owned by SCA, vehicles rented or leased by SCA, or vehicles owned by SCA staff/contractors which are being used for approved SCA business (excluding transporting SCA staff to and from work). Before driving an SCA vehicle or transporting members in a personal vehicle, drivers must meet SCA qualifications, documentation and training requirements.

Eligibility for Driving:

- SCA Members and staff must be 21 to drive an SCA owned, rented, leased or borrowed vehicle.
- SCA Members or staff that are under 21 are allowed to drive their personally owned vehicle (POV) for SCA business but MAY NOT transport other members or staff.
- All SCA drivers must be under current employment or volunteer contract with SCA, possess a current valid driver's license including any required endorsements.
- All SCA drivers must pass yearly Motor Vehicles Record (MVR) check and complete SCA Driver Education (SCA's Drive Safe- Drive Smart Program).

Expectations:

- While operating an SCA vehicle, all local, state and federal vehicle laws must be followed.
- All vehicles must have passed a current state inspection.

- All passengers and drivers in SCA vehicles must wear seat belts at all times while the vehicle is in motion. If seat belts are non-functioning or missing for any seat, the affected seat cannot be used.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or other mind altering drugs (prescribed or non-prescribed) is prohibited.
- All SCA drivers and passengers are required to behave professionally, included but not limited to: keep hands and feet inside the vehicle and keep music at a reasonable volume.
- The following are prohibited in SCA vehicles: use of portable phones by the driver, transport of alcohol (opened or unopened), smoking, pets, picking up hitch-hikers, or affixing non-SCA sanctioned bumper stickers or decals.
- All SCA drivers must be alert and rested.
 - Drivers must take a break at least 15 minutes long after driving uninterrupted for 3 hours.
 - No group or individual may drive longer than 8 hours in one 24 hour period.
 - Drivers may not retain employment with another organization which requires overnight driving or excessive loss of sleep over the course of the program term.
- Drivers must assess the safety of the vehicle before each use.
- Drivers must ensure that vehicles are loaded and unloaded in safe locations.
- For all Crews, SCA vehicles must carry the following items at all times: a minimum of two sets of keys (if possible), one form of communication (radio, cell phone or satellite phone), \$20 emergency cash, one insurance card, a completed Emergency Response Form, all member and staff medical disclosure forms, local and SCA safety contact information, a first aid kit, an emergency vehicle kit, all relevant maps and a jack and spare tire.
- Vehicles should not be driven more than 2,000 miles (leased vehicles) or 2,500 miles (rental vehicles) per month. Special circumstances may be allowed with prior permission from an SCA Program Director.

Transport of people

- Anyone under the age of 18 who is not currently participating in SCA must have written parental consent to ride in a SCA vehicle or in a SCA staff member's personal vehicle.
- SCA will not rent or lease 15 passenger vans.

Transport of equipment

- Roof loading of vehicles is only permitted when done in accordance with the vehicle manufacturer's specifications.
- Tools may not be transported in SCA vehicles carrying passengers unless secured in one of the following ways:
 - In the trunk of a car

- On a roof rack, wrapped in a tarp, secured to the rack
 - In the bed of a pick-up, or otherwise physically separated from passenger space
 - Behind the last seat of a van wrapped in a tarp and secured to the floor.
- No towing is allowed without prior consent from the appropriate SCA Program Director.

Accountability

- Failure to follow SCA vehicle policies may result in a warning, loss of driving privileges and/or termination.
- Negligence and disregard for SCA vehicle policies may make you financially responsible for vehicle damages.
- All citations issued for moving or parking violations received in the course of operating a SCA or personal vehicle will be the responsibility of the employee or member.
- All citations issued for the condition of a SCA vehicle will be the responsibility of SCA while all citations issued for the condition of a personal vehicle will be the responsibility of the vehicle owner.

Project Quality Standards for Crews

The following standards are applied by SCA Staff to evaluate all projects requested by agency, corporate, or other entities intended to engage SCA participants in conservation work projects occurring on the land that they manage. SCA may approve projects viewed as acceptable without meeting every criterion listed here. Please note that beside these standards, the key tool for assessing the appropriateness of an SCA Crew is the *Commuter Crew Handbook*. These standards should be considered for internal use only, and they are printed here as a guide to Crew Leaders.

1. The nature and location of the Crew's work project and recreation site/s must be free from any inherent and unacceptable risk. This includes (but is not limited to) consideration of:
 - Any situation which would violate SCA safety standards. Examples include Members using chain saws or other inappropriate tools, inadequate seat belts in a vehicle, use of ropes, etc.
 - Assurance that the environment is free of any hidden or pervasive health or safety hazards such as toxic waste, hazardous material (including chemicals used as defoliants or preservatives), radiation, explosive materials, etc. Care must also be taken to assess more natural environmental hazards like poison oak, excessive insects, large and small animals, etc.
 - Location in environmentally unstable or unsafe locations. This may include avoidance of normally acceptable environments because of seasonal cycles (i.e., desert environments in high summer, etc.).
2. The project must be appropriate for our Crews and in line with SCA's mission. Factors to consider include:

- That the work should be consistent with sound recreation, resource or conservation management techniques, and have an obvious, positive impact on the land.
- That the duration or scope of the work be defined to assure that the leaders may successfully motivate the Crew to both complete the work and to take pride in their accomplishment.
- That the work should provide ample opportunity for environmental and experiential education, promote personal challenge, encourage the development of new skills and provide a medium for developing responsibility and stewardship.
- That the work not be so tedious in nature as to discourage the principles SCA is committed to foster as listed above.
- That in completing the work, that the Members feel welcomed and valued by the partner agency or host site.
- That after completion, the work project is accessible to the Members, their families and other SCA Members.

3. The hosting agency (if applicable) must fully meet the obligations for which they agree under the operative Master Cooperative Agreement (or other such instrument) signed between SCA and the agency. These obligations include:

- Commitment to provide prompt, adequate emergency response and assistance.
- Sufficient project supervision and oversight must be provided. This includes a clearly defined work project that is effectively flagged (or otherwise surveyed), with specific specifications provided in writing to the Crew Leader.
- Appropriate training to ensure the safe and effective completion of the project, with special attention to the management of hazards.
- Adequate logistical support, including access to bathrooms and re-supply of materials
- Availability of area educational resources.
- Provision of all appropriate tools and safety gear, particularly including a radio when appropriate.
- Provision of all building material, or approval for use of native materials.

This chapter has included a long list of policies!

Please do not hesitate to contact your supervisor with any questions regarding these policies. As you read on in the *SCA Commuter Crew Leader Handbook*, we will offer many strategies to integrate these policies into a total framework for you to run a successful Crew.