

Eastern States Speleological Organization

Policy on guiding caving trips for organizations

It is the desire of the Eastern States Speleological Organization (ESSO) to promote awareness of caves and cave conservation issues. We, therefore, welcome the opportunity to assist your organization with your caving experience. By establishing clear mutual expectations, however, your group's experience will be a rewarding and enjoyable one.

We ask that any group for whom we assist in experiencing a wild cave trip consider and follow the following rules:

1. Groups of minors must be accompanied by a representative adult at all times. In the case of mixed gender groups, we require that a representative adult of the same gender accompany group. One possible exception would be a female who is accompanied by her father/guardian.
2. All equipment for each participant must be provided by the group or individuals in the group. Please see the 'Required Equipment', 'Optional Equipment', and 'Equipment Resources' lists for further information.
3. Each individual is responsible for their own snacks and/or drinks.
4. All participants must be capable and willing to act in a responsible manner as well as follow the instructions of the guide at all times. This is absolutely crucial to insure the safety of the entire group.

Required Equipment

Caving can be a dangerous activity without proper attention to specific rules and safety procedures. We realize that outfitting for a caving trip can add additional costs to planned activities. However, wild caving has particular rules which are in place to reduce the risks associated with the activity. These rules apply to any trip into a wild cave and should never be negotiated. **Most** of reported caving accidents are caused by the lack of one or more of these pieces of equipment.

1. A construction or climbing type helmet with a chinstrap. A bicycle type helmet with strap will be expectable, but some styles can be difficult to mount a light onto. All helmets must have a chinstrap. See 'Equipment Resources' for chinstrap instructions.
2. A helmet mounted light that uses at least two (2) AA batteries.
3. Minimum of two (2) additional light sources that use at least two (2) AA batteries. These backup light sources should be as good as and use the same **type** of batteries as the primary. It is desirable that one (1) of these backup lights be mounted to the helmet as well.

4. Lug-soled boots or shoes of heavy construction that have deep tread and will provide ankle support. Tennis shoes are unacceptable for caving and can cause dangerous slip-and-fall situations as well as significant ankle injuries.
5. Minimum of one (1) set of fresh batteries for each light source. For example, if primary light source requires two (2) AA batteries and both backup lights require two (2) AA batteries each, the participant will need to carry at least six (6) fresh batteries.
6. One (1) large black, folded trash bag. This can be stored in top of helmet or in a pack and is use by the participant in the event he/she becomes extremely cold.

Optional Equipment

1. Kneepads are optional but highly recommended. They are optional simply because kneepads are not an item necessary in the protection ones life as is a helmet. Be forewarned, though, that crawling on rock without kneepads will hurt and in most cases cause painful abrasions.
2. Pack. Again, optional but strongly encouraged. A pack is used to carry a participant's food, water, extra lights, extra batteries, or other emergency gear. Typical trail backpacks do not work well but are acceptable. Framed packs are absolutely unacceptable. Fanny packs or day packs work well as do military surplus canvas gas mask packs. Be aware that packs will be subjected to severe wear and tear and become very, very dirty.
3. Emergency blanket. While a trash bag is the traditional item, Mylar space blankets can be used in hypothermic emergencies.

Equipment Resources

Years of caving experience has taught many cavers where to obtain the required caving equipment. While vendors specializing in caving gear exist, many 'first-time' or 'occasional' cavers find acceptable gear locally.



This typical construction-type helmet is available at most home improvement retail stores at approximately \$7.00 - \$8.00

Figure 1 Typical Construction-Type Helmet

