

# Adult Leader Guide

Swimming & Lifesaving Merit Badge Weekend  
**ZBASE · August 7–9, 2026**

*For parents, unit leaders, and adults  
pursuing Aquatics Supervision certification.*

*April 2026*

## Welcome to the Weekend

Thank you for bringing your Scout — or yourself — to the 2026 Swimming & Lifesaving Merit Badge Weekend at ZBASE. In two and a half days your Scouts are going to complete two Eagle-required merit badges, and up to six adults are going to leave with current Scouting America Aquatics Supervision certification cards. Both outcomes require your help.

This guide explains two things. First: what every adult at the event is responsible for, whether you are a parent watching from the deck, a Unit Leader staffing a buddy check, or a Crew Guide on the event roster. Second: what to expect if you are one of the six adults taking on the SWR track alongside your Scout.

A quick reminder of why we run this event the way we do. Scouting America has arguably the strongest water-safety record of any youth organization in the United States, and that record is built on eight specific disciplines we call Safe Swim Defense. Safe Swim Defense is not a checklist we wave at the deck; it is how we actually conduct every aquatics activity. You are about to see all eight points in action. If you leave this weekend able to run them in your own troop, this event paid for itself twice over.

### **The Eight Points of Safe Swim Defense**

Qualified Supervision · Personal Health Review · Safe Area · Response Personnel · Lookout · Ability Groups · Buddy System · Discipline. Every swimming activity in Scouting America, every single one, is conducted under these eight points. They are not suggestions. They will be visible on the deck and referenced at every tailgate briefing this weekend.

# Arrival & First Evening

## Getting to ZBASE

GPS to 11301 Zink Ranch Road, Skiatook OK 74070. At the front gate, enter gate code 0862. Speed limit on Zink Ranch is 25 mph (no exceptions). At the top of the first hill, veer right and follow signs to ZBASE / Red Castle Gun Club. Do not go down drives marked Private Drive or follow the road to Babbitt Cub World or the Boy Scout Loop.

If you get lost, do not call the Zink Ranch Manager — many programs run at Zink Ranch and they will not have our roster. Text Carey Neely (Course Director, on-site during the event) at 918-605-4369 if needed.

## Check-in Window

Check-in is Friday from 4:00 to 6:30 PM at the Zarrow Complex (West). Please come at any time in that window. We will not accommodate early check-ins. Arrive as close as you can to your registration confirmation.

At check-in you will hand over:

- Scouting America Annual Health & Medical Record Parts A, B for each Scout and each attending adult
- Blue Cards, pre-filled and signed by the Unit Leader (Scouts only)
- For adult SWR trainees: evidence of current Safe Swim Defense (screenshot from my.scouting.org is fine)

## Please Eat Dinner Before You Arrive

Friday's program is dense. We begin the Safe Swim Defense classroom at 7:00 PM and move to the pool at 7:45 PM for the Scouting America Swimmer Test, stroke screening, and basic floats. Cracker-barrel is at 9:45 PM. Eat dinner before you arrive.

## Lodging

Participants stay in Zink Lodge. Bunkrooms are assigned by age and gender per Scouting America Youth Protection standards:

- Male Scouts: downstairs bunkroom
- Female Scouts: smaller upstairs bunkroom
- Adult males and adult females: share the larger upstairs bunkroom with a dividing wall
- Downstairs restroom: adult use only
- Standalone restrooms and showers are nearby for all to use

Bunkrooms have twin-bed bunkbeds with twin mattresses. Bring twin sheets or a sleeping bag, a pillow, and a blanket or second layer. If weather forecasts a cool night, plan for mid-70s indoors, please do not change the thermostats, as that can freeze the building's cooling system. With proper supervision, you may tent behind the Zarrow Complex if you prefer; let the Mate know at check-in.

**If the forecast is hot**

ZBASE may offer the option to travel home to sleep if you follow these rules: (1) tell the Mate at check-in who is staying and who is traveling; (2) arrive no later than 7:30 AM Saturday and 7:30 AM Sunday; (3) parents or unit carpools handle the rides (ZBASE does not coordinate rides); (4) if one adult is supervising multiple Scouts, they all travel together or all stay. Scouts may not stay without supervision present.

# What to Pack

## Scout Packing List

- Scouting America Annual Health & Medical Record, Parts A, B, and C (required)
- Pre-filled Blue Cards for Swimming and Lifesaving, signed by Unit Leader
- Swimming Merit Badge pamphlet AND Lifesaving Merit Badge pamphlet (2026 printing, SKU 659216 required reading)
- Pen or pencil
- Swim trunks (at least two pairs)
- Rash guard or long-sleeved UPF shirt that can get wet (strongly recommended)
- Swim goggles (optional; only allowed during classification test, not rescue skills)
- Water shoes or aqua socks for the pool deck
- Camp shoes (closed-toe) for outside the pool area
- Two full changes of clothes (expect to be wet most of the weekend)
- Pajamas or sleep clothes
- Towels (at least three, one gets soaked every session)
- Sunscreen SPF 30+ that can be applied and re-applied
- Sunglasses, polarized preferred, with a strap to keep them from the water
- Wide-brim hat (best) or ball cap; hats with chin cords are ideal
- Insect repellent
- 32 oz refillable water bottle
- Sleeping bag or twin sheets + blanket + pillow
- Flip-flops for showers
- Soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant
- Small backpack or day-bag to carry to pool
- One old T-shirt that can be sacrificed (clothing-removal rescue drill, Lifesaving Req 9)
- Prescription medications in original bottles, with dosing instructions noted on medical form
- Scout uniform optional; activity uniform or casual OK (unit policy governs travel attire)

## Adult Supervising Packing List

Same list as Scouts minus the merit badge pamphlets and Blue Cards — plus the items below.

- Current Scouting America registration (ID card or my.scouting.org screenshot)
- Youth Protection Training (current) and must be on file
- Safe Swim Defense (current within 2 years), recommended for anyone supervising Scouts at the pool
- Camp chair (useful for deck and cracker-barrel)
- Phone charger and spare batteries for any personal devices

## Adult SWR Trainee Packing List

Same as Adult Supervising, plus:

- Aquatics Supervision (No. 34346), free PDF download, printed locally; bring a physical copy
- Current Safe Swim Defense certificate (required prerequisite)
- Medical form with physical fitness portion completed (Part B)
- Notebook for classroom sessions and exam prep
- Swimsuit for intensive water-rescue drills (plan to be in the water most of Saturday)
- Whistle (nice-to-have for practice; staff-issue whistles will be provided during drills)

- Closed-toe water shoes with good tread (you will be doing stride-jump and compact-jump entries)

### **Why the UPF shirt matters**

You will be around water for roughly 18 of the 40 hours you are on-site. Reflected UV from the pool surface adds roughly 30–50% to your effective exposure. A rash guard or UPF-rated long-sleeve shirt is the simplest way to avoid a sunburn that will derail your weekend. If you forget yours, you can buy one in the ZBASE Trading Post.

# Two Adult Tracks: Supervising vs. SWR

Every adult on-site is on one of two tracks. Decide which describes you before Friday.

## Track A — Adults Supervising

This is the larger track. You are here to supervise your Scout or your unit, not to earn a training card. You will:

- Sleep in the lodge or tent (or travel home under the rules above)
- Eat meals with the group
- Staff buddy checks at the pool when asked — every 10 minutes during swim time
- Help with the informal safety team: watching the deck, spotting horseplay, being an extra set of eyes on Scouts away from the pool
- Sit in on classroom sessions if you would like; the Safe Swim Defense and rescue-breathing/CPR sessions are useful refreshers for any adult
- Not provide instruction, merit badge teaching is done by the counselors and Training Team

## Track B — Adult SWR Trainees

Six slots are available for adults who want to earn Aquatics Supervision: Swimming & Water Rescue while their Scouts earn Swimming and Lifesaving. This is a full 8-hour Scouting America course compressed into the weekend. You will:

- Embed with an assigned Crew for all shared content (most of the Scout program)
- Peel off for three SWR-specific blocks — Friday orientation, Saturday classification-admin practice, Saturday night written exam
- Be in the water for much of Saturday — plan on it
- Pass the prerequisites at the Friday pool session: BSA Swimmer Test and 10-lb weight recovery from 8 feet
- Earn 80% on the written exam, which is based on Aquatics Supervision sections I and II
- Receive a 3-year SWR training card at Sunday closing — signed by an NCS Aquatics Instructor

## Prerequisites for SWR

If you signed up for the SWR track, verify these now — not Friday afternoon:

1. You are a registered member of Scouting America ([my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org)).
2. You have current Safe Swim Defense. Complete it free at [my.scouting.org](http://my.scouting.org) if you don't.
3. Your Annual Health & Medical Record Part B is complete and signed.
4. You can confidently complete the BSA Swimmer Test without stopping: jump feet-first into water over your head, swim 75 yards in a strong manner using any combination of sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl, then swim 25 yards using an easy resting backstroke, with at least one sharp turn, then rest by floating.
5. You can recover a 10-pound weight from 8 feet of water.
6. You are prepared for in-water contact rescues — practicing wrist tows, armpit tows, and head-hold escapes with a fellow adult.

If you have any doubt about the swim prerequisites, get to a pool the week before and run through them. The instructor can offer tips but cannot provide remedial swimming instruction during the course.

**What SWR is and what it isn't**

SWR is the Scouting America training that qualifies a unit leader to supervise swimming in locations without professional lifeguards. It covers safe-area setup, response-personnel duties, and water rescue skills beyond what Safe Swim Defense alone provides. SWR is NOT a lifeguard certification, and it is NOT a substitute for BSA Lifeguard for camp aquatics staff. It is exactly the right training for a Unit Leader who wants to take Scouts to a lake.

# How You Can Help Across the Weekend

Whether Track A or Track B, here are concrete ways your presence supports the event.

## During Check-in (Friday 4:00–6:30 PM)

- Have your medical forms ready as it speeds intake dramatically
- If you're with a unit, help other adults complete their forms
- Guide arriving families to the Lodge and to the restrooms

## During Classroom Sessions

- Sit at the back or side so staff can move freely
- Phones silenced; if you must take a call, step into the hallway
- Help hand out pamphlets, pens, and SSD posters when asked
- Model active-learner behavior — Scouts notice

## At the Pool

- Wear closed shoes on the deck; pool decks are slick
- Do not enter the water unless specifically asked by the Boatswain or your Training Team Lead
- Staff buddy checks: if you hear a whistle and "Buddies!" help count
- Spotters are welcome for Scouts attempting weight recovery or distance swims, but only from the deck
- Never leave a Scout alone near the water — Youth Protection and Safe Swim Defense both require buddy/adult pairing at all times

## At Meals

- Scouts eat first in the dining rotation; adults fall in behind
- Help pre-bus tables after meals to speed turnover

## At Lights-Out

- Adults of the correct gender in each youth bunkroom (Youth Protection)
- No adult alone with a Scout who is not their own family member, ever
- Lights out means lights out; the Mate will confirm

## Emergencies

If you see an emergency, shout for a staff member and point to the incident. Do not move a victim unless there is an immediate life threat. Follow the instructions of the on-duty lifeguard and the Skipper. Lookouts will signal the pool clear with three short whistle blasts, when you hear that signal, get out of the water if you are in it, and clear the deck path.

# Safe Swim Defense — Plain-English Refresher

You don't need to memorize this for the weekend, but if you take your unit to a pool or a lake after this event, here is what each point means in practice. This is a plain-English companion to the Guide to Safe Scouting, not a substitute.

## 1. Qualified Supervision

Every Scouting America swim is supervised by a responsible adult 21 or older who has completed Safe Swim Defense and who accepts responsibility for everyone in their care. If that adult does not also have SWR or BSA Lifeguard certification, Scouting America strongly recommends at least one other adult on-site who does. That's exactly what the SWR track at this event is designed to produce.

## 2. Personal Health Review

No participant swims without a health history on file. A parent or guardian signs it for a minor. For adults with significant conditions, cardiovascular, respiratory, seizure disorders, recent surgery, the adult supervisor should consult a physician before allowing participation. Part B of the Annual Health & Medical Record is the standard document.

## 3. Safe Area

Before anyone enters the water, the supervisor inspects the swim area. Depth, water quality, temperature, currents, bottom hazards. Swimming areas are defined by ability group with controlled access. Moving water, large waves, murky water, or water with visible algae or foam are reasons to delay or cancel. Water below 70°F is reason for limited, monitored duration only.

## 4. Response Personnel

If the facility doesn't provide lifeguards, the supervisor assigns at least two rescue personnel with additional rescuers added for every 10 participants. They have rescue equipment on hand and assigned areas of responsibility. They are not doing anything else, not cooking, not setting up camp, not taking photos.

## 5. Lookout

One person, who is not the supervisor and not a rescuer, serves as the lookout. They watch the entire swim area, watch the weather, and make sure nothing is drifting out of Safe Swim Defense. They call buddy checks. They are rotated every 20–30 minutes to stay sharp.

## 6. Ability Groups

Every participant is classified as Swimmer, Beginner, or Nonswimmer based on a standardized Scouting America swim test. The Swimmer area extends into water over the head. The Beginner area is shallow enough to stand. Nonswimmers are in water no deeper than their armpits. Groups do not cross between areas.

## 7. Buddy System

Every person is paired with another. Buddies enter and exit the water together. Buddies watch each other. Every 10 minutes (or as needed) the lookout calls "Buddies!" and every pair raises

joined hands while the lookout counts to 10 and confirms the total. Slow pairs are coached privately afterward.

## 8. Discipline

Rules work only when followed. The supervisor explains the rules at a tailgate briefing before every swim. Rules are applied consistently. A Scout or adult who cannot follow the rules sits out that swim.

### **If you only remember one thing**

Safe Swim Defense is a team system, not a solo act. The Qualified Supervisor, the Response Personnel, the Lookout, and the Buddy System are four layers of protection that catch what any one of them misses. The reason Scouting America's aquatics safety record is so strong is that all four layers are running simultaneously on every single swim.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **My Scout passed their Swimmer Test at summer camp in June. Do they have to do it again?**

Yes. Every aquatics program in Scouting America requires current classification before the session. Your Scout can bring their classification card from camp; we'll use that as evidence of familiarity, but we re-test everyone Friday night so we know where each Scout stands for this specific program.

### **My Scout can swim but struggles with strokes. Can they still earn Swimming Merit Badge?**

Very likely yes. Swimming MB Req 3 expects strokes to be performed in "good form" — not competition form. We'll coach stroke mechanics all weekend. If your Scout's stroke work is marginal, be prepared for a direct conversation Sunday morning about whether to sign off the requirement now or continue practicing before a counselor signs the Blue Card.

### **My Scout is not a strong swimmer. Should they still attempt Lifesaving?**

Read the Note to the Counselor in the 2026 Lifesaving pamphlet (SKU 659216). Lifesaving explicitly requires earning Swimming MB first (Req 2a) and completing a 400-yard continuous swim (Req 2b). The counselor will assess readiness at the Friday swim test. If your Scout is not ready for Lifesaving, they can complete Swimming this weekend and come back for Lifesaving in a future session. That is a win, not a failure.

### **Can I take the SWR course without my Scout attending?**

Yes. The SWR seats are open to any registered adult who registers for the event, whether or not they have a Scout attending. If demand exceeds 6 seats, priority goes to adults with attending Scouts.

### **Is this the same as BSA Lifeguard?**

No. SWR is the unit-leader-level course for supervising swims where lifeguards are not provided. BSA Lifeguard is a more intensive course for camp aquatics staff. SWR is valid for 3 years; BSA Lifeguard typically lasts 2 years. An SWR-certified adult should still use professionally-staffed lifeguards when available.

### **My Scout is 15 and already has Lifesaving. Can they take SWR instead?**

Yes, the course is open to any registered adult or youth age 15 or older. The slot would count against the 6-adult allocation. Contact Carey Neely (Course Director) at [carey@neelycomms.org](mailto:carey@neelycomms.org) before registration closes if you'd like this arrangement.

### **What about CPR certification? Does my Scout get a card?**

The Saturday evening CPR and rescue breathing block is designed to satisfy Lifesaving MB Requirements 16a and 16b, which explicitly require the instruction be delivered "under the guidance of a current CPR/AED instructor trained by a nationally certified provider." The event Skipper is a current American Red Cross CPR/AED Instructor, so Req 16b is fully signed off at this event, it does not become a partial on the Blue Card. Whether your Scout receives a standalone CPR card from ARC is a separate question: Scouts who wish to earn a full ARC CPR/AED certification card should enroll in a dedicated ARC course; our session satisfies the merit badge requirement but does not automatically issue a stand-alone ARC card unless you coordinate with the Skipper in advance.

**What's the cell service like?**

Spotty. Plan as if it is unreliable. A text message to Carey Neely, the Course Director, at 918-605-4369 is your best bet if you need to reach staff during the event.

**Can siblings come?**

No. This is a focused merit badge weekend and the 30-slot cap is real. Siblings are not permitted on-site; please arrange care for them.

**What happens if we have to leave early?**

Participants must be present for the entire weekend to earn both merit badges. Partial completion is the exception, not the rule. If you must leave early for a true emergency, meet with the Skipper at check-in to discuss what requirements can be signed off before departure.

**What if my Scout is afraid of deep water?**

The Friday swim test and the entire Lifesaving program require comfort in deep water. The Skipper and Crew Guide will be honest with you on Friday night if the program isn't the right fit this year. There is no shame in waiting a season — many Scouts earn Swimming at age 13 and Lifesaving at 14 or 15 after building confidence.

## Logistics at a Glance

<b>Dates</b>	Friday Aug 7 – Sunday Aug 9, 2026
<b>Address</b>	11301 Zink Ranch Road, Skiatook OK 74070
<b>Gate Code</b>	0862 (every car — no exceptions)
<b>Speed Limit</b>	25 mph on Zink Ranch — enforced
<b>Check-in</b>	Friday 4:00–6:30 PM at Zarrow Complex (West)
<b>Close</b>	Sunday 12:00 PM (camp cleared)
<b>Cost</b>	Youth \$70 · Adult \$35 (lodging, all meals included)
<b>Required forms</b>	Annual Health & Medical Record A, B, C · Blue Cards signed by Unit Leader
<b>Pool location</b>	Helmerich Pool Complex, on-site at ZBASE
<b>Lodging</b>	Zink Lodge bunkrooms · tenting allowed behind Zarrow Complex
<b>Meals</b>	Friday cracker-barrel · Saturday breakfast/lunch/dinner + cracker-barrel · Sunday grab-and-go breakfast
<b>Course Director</b>	Carey Neely · 918-605-4369 · <a href="mailto:carey@neelycomms.org">carey@neelycomms.org</a> (program questions, on-site during event)
<b>ZBase Director</b>	Shelby Nuckolls · <a href="mailto:shelby.nuckolls@scouting.org">shelby.nuckolls@scouting.org</a> (facility, registration logistics)
<b>Emergency text</b>	918-605-4369 (Carey, Course Director — during event only)
<b>Registration</b>	<a href="https://scoutingevent.com/488-107356">https://scoutingevent.com/488-107356</a> — deadline July 24, 2026

## Final Word

You are about to spend a weekend around a pool with a bunch of Scouts. Watch them. They are about to get very good at something genuinely dangerous, saving a person's life in the water. The seriousness of the skill is matched by the confidence they earn from mastering it. That confidence lasts a lifetime, and by the time these kids are running their own troop swim, they will have learned to run it the way you are about to see this weekend, with eight points of Safe Swim Defense and no compromise on any of them.

Venture onward.