For the latest U.S. State Department information on travel to Canada, click here. It is important that leaders of BSA groups traveling to Canada read the information there.

Two specific questions that arise when taking BSA packs, troops, and crews to Canada are:

1. What are the border crossing procedures when taking BSA groups into Canada and returning to the U.S.?

2. What actions should be taken to make sure Scouts and leaders are covered by health insurance while in Canada?

US - CANADA BORDER CROSSING PROCEDURES FOR BSA GROUPS

ADULT LEADERS – Anyone over 18 who is a U.S. citizen returning home from Canada by land or sea is required to present either a U.S. Passport, a U.S. Passport Card, or an Enhanced Driver’s License.

U.S. Passport – This is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies a person’s identity and nationality. It is accepted for travel by air, land and sea.

U.S. Passport Card – This is a limited-use travel document that fits in your wallet and costs less than a U.S. Passport. It is only valid for travel by land and sea.

Enhanced Driver’s License (EDL) – Several states and Canadian provinces/territories issue this driver’s license or identification document that denotes identity and citizenship. It is specifically designed for cross-border travel into the U.S. by land or sea.

CUBS, SCOUTS, AND VENTURERS UNDER 19: U.S. and Canadian citizen children under age 19 arriving by land or sea from contiguous territory and traveling with a school group, religious group, social or cultural organization, or sports team, may also present an original or copy of his or her birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate, or a Canadian Citizenship Card. (It has been confirmed that a Scout group qualifies as a “social or cultural organization.”)

The group should be prepared to present a letter on organizational letterhead with the following information:
- The name of the group and supervising adult;
- A list of the children on the trip, and the primary address, phone number, date of birth, place of birth, and name of at least one parent or legal guardian for each child; and
- A written and signed statement of the supervising adult certifying that he or she has obtained parental or legal guardian consent for each participating child.

Cubs, Scouts, and Venturers who are under 18 need a YOUTH PERMISSION FORM (See below.). If your group is traveling in several vehicles, the paperwork for each person must be in the vehicle that person is riding in. Make sure that your Scouts are in uniform when they cross the border and polite during the border crossing.

YOUTH PERMISSION FORM – The Canadian Government recommends on their web site:
That a consent document or letter be carried to prove that the child has the permission of the absent lawful parent(s) or guardian to travel. This document should be specific to each trip and should include contact information for the parent(s) or guardian. A sample consent letter is provided for parents to use as a model to draft their own consent letter.

It is strongly recommended that children carry a consent letter for each and every trip abroad. Although anyone can witness/sign these letters, it is advisable to have the consent letter certified, stamped or sealed by an official who has the authority to administer an oath or solemn declaration (ie. a commissioner for oaths, notary public, lawyer, etc.) so that the validity of the letter will not be questioned. It is up to each official/individual who witnesses such a letter to decide what proof he/she needs to see to be able to witness/sign the letter. Officials should only witness/sign a letter of consent if he/she is convinced that the individual requesting the letter is who he/she claims to be and that adequate proof has been provided.

This consent document could be required even if the separation or divorce documents award custody of the child to the accompanying parent, but the non-custodial parent has legal access or visiting rights to the child.

In addition to the certified consent document from the absent parent, a copy of any separation, divorce or custody decree might be requested.

A child of divorced or separated parents who is traveling without either parent could use either one consent document signed by both parents or two separate documents.

If a legal guardian is accompanying the child, then a copy of the court order granting guardianship might also be requested.

If only one parent’s name appears on the birth certificate, and the child is traveling with the other parent, then we also recommend that a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate be carried.

If one parent has died, a certified copy of the death certificate could also be carried.

Remember that customs officers, as well as other authorities, inside and outside Canada are looking for missing children and may ask questions. Make sure you carry the proper identification for yourself and any children traveling with you. In addition to passports, proper identification could include, but is not limited to, birth certificates, citizenship cards, landed immigrant records and certificates of Indian status.

COVERAGE BY HEALTH INSURANCE WHILE IN CANADA

It is important to make sure that every Scout and leader is covered by health insurance while you are in Canada and that your trip leaders have the information on how to use that insurance. The US State Department’s web page on “Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad” states, “Before going abroad, learn what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas. If your health insurance policy provides coverage outside the United States, REMEMBER to carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of such insurance and a claim form. Although many health insurance companies will pay “customary and reasonable” hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for your medical evacuation back to the United States. Medical evacuation can easily cost $10,000 and up, depending on your location and medical condition.” Parents of youth participants on your trip to Canada should be made aware of this information. For a U.S. State Department list of companies that offer health insurance and medical evacuation insurance for travel to other countries, click here, then scroll down and click on the FAQs “Where can I find a list of companies that provide travel insurance?” and “Where can I find a list of companies that provide medical evacuations and services?”

For our overseas trips, in addition to having a completed BSA Health and Medical Record Form, Parts A, B, and C, for each participant in the trip, with the emergency treatment authorization section filled in and signed. we ask each Scout who is covered by his/her parents’ health insurance family plan to give us a photocopy of his parents’ insurance card and to carry another photocopy of that card with him. For those insured by Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, the web page at www.bcbs.com/already-a-member/traveling-outside-of-the.html has a list of procedures to use to make claims overseas, a link to a list of participating providers, and a link to printable
International Claim Forms. We print and carry with us their recommended procedures, the list of participating providers in countries we will be visiting, and several claim forms. We ask each Scout and adult in a non-Blue Cross Blue Shield plan to provide us with similar information and forms.

All Michigan Crossroads Council units are covered by BSA’s Council Accident and Sickness Plan which is administered by Health Special Risk, Inc. This is secondary insurance which only covers costs that are not covered by other insurance. It provides coverage for “injuries occurring anywhere in the world” while on a BSA trip.

If you will be participating in a jamboree or national camp, make sure that you understand the arrangements for treatment of illness and injury at the camp and the insurance coverage there.