

Sampling Safety

Kids and water are a natural combination. To ensure the two mix well, consider the following guidelines before going to the stream site.



How do I manage my group in the field?

- Have an adult supervisor accompany each separate group, with six students or less per adult.
- Keep a good line of communication between groups at all times (e.g., stay within hearing distance).
- Be aware of medical considerations.
- Make sure each group has ready access to first aid.
- Know which students are allergic to bee stings and how to handle a reaction.
- Know the causes and early warning signs of hypothermia and heat exhaustion.

What are potentially hazardous conditions?

- Be aware of steep, slippery banks. Holes, vertical banks and other hazards can be especially difficult to see when the banks are very heavily vegetated.
- Scout the area for dangerous trash such as broken glass, rusted wire or metal scraps. Flag areas to avoid, if necessary.
- Scout the area for poison ivy, poison oak and stinging nettles. Make sure everyone in the group can identify these plants.

When is it unsafe to enter the stream?

- Moving water is deceptively dangerous. Don't let students enter water over their knees or water that is moving very fast (more than 1 foot per second).
- If you suspect your stream is seriously polluted, contact your local County Health Department or local Division of Water Quality office to determine if your stream is safe for student monitoring.
- Never sample during a lightning storm and beware of sudden storms higher in the watershed which could produce flash floods.
- Students should not enter the stream without proper clothing (waders, or good wading shoes and a change of clothing).
- Never let students enter water if enough adult supervisors are not present.

What are the chemical safety guidelines?

- Avoid contact between chemicals and eyes, nose and mouth. When opening the chemical packets, always use the scissors provided or tear the packets. NEVER open the packets with teeth.
- You may wish to wear latex gloves and goggles when conducting chemical tests. Gloves and goggles are included in your supply tub. Cover test tubes with stoppers, not fingers, when mixing.
- After handling chemicals, wash hands thoroughly. Use lots of water, and avoid no-water cleaners.
- Deposit all sample solutions in designated plastic, screw-top waste bottles (you will find these in your monitoring kit). Flush this waste down the school sink or any sink that drains to a municipal waste water treatment facility. NOTE: The solutions remaining from the tests can be mixed together without the risk of explosion or the forming of toxic gases.