

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**  
**Range and Target Activities Throwing Tomahawks and Knives**  
**FOR UNIT COORDINATED EVENTS**  
**Buffalo Trace Council**

This document is based on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) established by Philmont Scout Ranch and implemented since 2015. The Scouting America National Outdoor Programs Committee, Range and Target Activities Subcommittee is adopting the SOP as the standard for Tomahawk Throwing activities at Council activities.

Note: Tomahawk Throwing is an age-appropriate activity for Scouts BSA, Venturing, and Exploring. It is not an approved activity for Cub Scouts, or Webelos, or Arrow of Light Scouts. This is BSA National policy and local Councils and units are required to follow the rules strictly.

Training Certification of Tomahawk Throwing currently requires the supervising instructor to review the Tomahawk Throwing SOP and The Scouting America National Range and Target Activities Manual. This review will be conducted by a member of the Council Range and Target Activities Committee Training Team and includes setting up the tomahawk throwing range, observing the throwers, running the range under the supervision of the Council NCS Certified Personnel.

Safety of the participants & supervisors is the highest priority.

This SOP covers Tomahawk Throwing and Knife Throwing.

## **Safety Measures**

### **Staff Qualification and Training**

1. Tomahawk and Knife Throwing Programs must be supervised by a registered adult leader who is at least 18 years old and under the guidance of a Range Safety Officer, 21 years of age or older.
2. Each staff member must complete a throwing training program as part of Range Safety Officer or Rangemaster Training as directed by a Chief Range Safety Officer or a Range and Target Activities trained National Camp School graduate.
3. Training for operating a throwing range includes:
  - a. Proper care and storage of tomahawks
  - b. Range setup, supervision and safety procedures
  - c. Tomahawk throwing practice, supervision and instructions
  - d. Teaching techniques
  - e. Emergency procedures and first aid

### **Equipment and Ranges**

1. The Range requires a clearly marked perimeter to alert bystanders to potential danger.
2. The Range must have a clearly marked buffer all around, with 15-25 feet on the sides and 25-5- feet to the rear of the range.
3. Access to the range is controlled and clearly marked. The range area should include separate staging area for instruction/observation and clearly marked throwing and safety lines. Adjacent throwing lanes are acceptable but must be at least 5 feet apart.
4. Distance to targets is 7 normal steps (10-15 Feet).
5. PPE such as eye and ear protection are not required, but closed toed shoes are required.
6. The range should be equipped with sufficient targets, stands, first aid kit, tomahawks, throwing knives and spare handles to address issues during range operation.
7. Council supplied tomahawks and throwing knives are the only equipment permitted.

### **Safety Practices**

1. All throwing activities are under the supervision of a trained staff member. Throwing is preceded by a review of the range rules, procedures, safety measures and range commands.
2. Each group observes a throwing demonstration with an explanation of the technique to throw, retrieve and remove items from the target, prior to any throwing activity.
3. Only one participant is allowed to throw at a time, unless the range is set up with multiple lanes and the minimum distance apart.
4. A maximum of 2 people (1 staff/1 thrower) are allowed in a throwing lane at one time.
5. Throwing is permitted using the appropriate wood cross section target (i.e. cookies). Soft items such as playing cards, paper targets, cloth handkerchiefs, etc., may be placed on the targets for use in skill competitions.

### **Range Setup**

- 1 All ranges must have adequate space and provide participants with a clear line of sight to the target. Each range must have a clearly marked perimeter to alert bystanders to danger.
- 2 Access to the range should be restricted with a clearly marked gate. The range should have a staging area where safety information and instructions can be shared. Throwing and safety lines should be clearly marked and at least 5 feet from each other. Each lane should be at least 5 feet wide to accommodate throwing space. The distance from the target face to the firing line is 7 normal steps for the thrower (10-15 feet). No more than 3 tomahawks knives may be thrown at a time.

### **Review Range Safety Rules**

- 1 Always stay clear of tomahawks and knives until they are instructed to do so.
- 2 Always keep the blade pointed downrange.
- 3 Do not retrieve thrown tomahawks and knives until instructed to go downrange.

### **Throwing line**

- 1 When instructed to safely do so, walk downrange to target. With back close to target, take seven normal steps back up throwing lane. This is a good spot to start throwing from.

### **Stances**

- 1 Side by side stance (this is the safest)

- a. Feet evenly square with the target
- b. Left hand on bottom of handle
- c. Right hand on top of left with thumb pointing up

2 Sideways (draw must still go directly overhead and not to the side)

- a. Body and feet 90 degrees from the target on dominant side
- b. Right hand on bottom of handle with thumb pointed up

### **Aiming**

1 Site the target with arm extended and tip pointed to desired spot.

### **Throwing**

- 1 Keep elbow and wrists locked
- 2 Draw back over top of head
- 3 Bring it forward until initial aiming point is reached
- 4 Release
- 5 Items should make one complete revolution when thrown.
- 6 Adjust throwing mark based on results. Butt first, too close, head first, too far away.

### **Retrieval**

1. Only when the Range Safety Officer directs, walk to the target – do not run.

- a. Proper technique:
  - i. Place one hand on the target safely away from blades and the other hand on the handle and pull up on the handle.
  - ii. Always remove the higher one first and place it on ground before retrieving second one.
  - iii. Pick up thrown items by the handle, close to heads and keep blades pointed away from you.
  - iv. Walk back to throwing line and return items to station.
  - v. Leave the throwing lane, exit the range and retrieve any personal gear/trash before departing the area.

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES APPROVAL**  
**Buffalo Trace Council, SCOUTING AMERICA**

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