

Knife and Tomahawk Throwing Policies

Cascade Pacific Council - Boy Scouts of America

1. Purpose

- a. To establish standard procedures for operating a tomahawk and knife throwing range.

2. References

- a. Boy Scout Handbook
- b. Boy Scout Safety Guidelines
- c. National Camporee Guide Book

3. Personnel

- a. Operation of a range requires a Range Master Officer and one Assistant Range Officer per each set of four throwing stations per station type (hawk or knife). For example, a four throwing station hawk range requires two people to operate the range. A four station hawk range plus a four station knife range would require a minimum of three people to operate the range. A five station hawk range plus a four station knife range would require a minimum of four people to operate the range. If the knife and hawk ranges are separated, then it will be required that there must be a separate Range Master Officer for each range.

b. Range Master Officer

- i. Has overall responsibility for the safe operation of the range
- ii. Directs and supervises assistant range officer(s)
- iii. Must be an adult (21 years of age or older)
- iv. Has had experience operating a knife or tomahawk range
- v. Understands and agrees to operate the range using the procedures outlined in this document

c. Assistant Range Officer

- i. Has responsibility to manage a throwing line of no more than four throwers
- ii. Is responsible for providing instruction to throwers before first throw for each round
- iii. Is responsible for keeping all throwers at their stations until releasing them to retrieve or to leave the area.
- iv. May be an older youth (16 years of age at a minimum)

- d. When referring the range personnel in the document, a range officer is either a Range Master Officer or a Range Assistant Officer. A range Master Officer may also be referred to as a Range Master.

4. Persons Authorized To Throw Knives Or Tomahawks.

- a. Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, Venturers, and adults may throw knives and tomahawks. Cub Scout or younger age youth are not permitted to throw knives or tomahawks.
- b. All throwers must have the physical strength and manual dexterity required to safely throw. If a range officer is uncertain of a thrower's ability, the range officer may test the participant, or may make other arrangements to ensure that the thrower, other participants, and the range remain safe.
- c. All throwers are responsible for handling the knives and tomahawks in a safe manner, which includes following the instructions of the range personnel.
- d. Any thrower behaving in an unsafe manner may be removed from the range by any one of the range personnel.

5. Authorized Throwing Equipment

a. Knives

i. Types of Knives

1. large blade with formed handled knives

- sheath knives
- blade is generally thicker
- handle is thicker than the blade, often at least three times thicker
- does not exhibit a spring nature when flexed

2. forged or thick throwing knives

- has a tang that is approximately the size of the blade
- generally sharp only on the tip
- usually balanced near the mid point of the knife
- does not exhibit a spring nature when flexed
- knives with blades approximately 3/16" to 1/4" or greater thickness

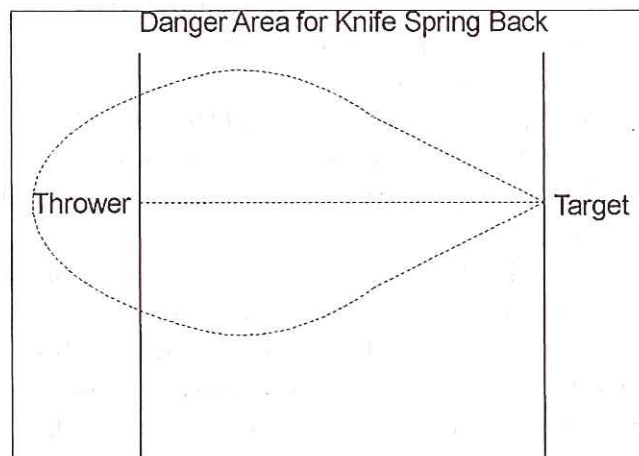
3. large blade with small or no handle (the tang is what the thrower holds, but there is no handle wrapped over the tang or the handle is small relative to the length of the blade)

- chef knives without handles
- knives with blades thinner than 1/8"

4. Other throwing objects

- specialty knives
- throwing stars
- other Martial Arts devices designed to be thrown

- The only authorized throwing knives are of types 1, 2, and 3 of section 5.a.i. Objects of type 4 in section 5.a.i are not permitted at any event.
- Knives of type 3 have a greater likelihood of springing back to the thrower and all knives of this type must be tested by the range officers before they may be used in the event. Testing should involve a minimum of 10 throws where the knife is thrown to be slightly under range (i.e., the knife has not completed its rotation), which is the case where maximum spring back to the thrower would occur. If the knife springs back more than one third of the distance from the thrower to the target, the knife should not be used.
- All knives are to be inspected by the range personnel and sharpened before use in the event. Periodic re-inspection should occur based on the conditions of the throwing event (ground surface, misses by throwers, knives striking another knife on the target, etc.).



b. Tomahawks

i. Types of Tomahawks

1. Cast Head, Wooden Handle
2. Forged Head, Wooden Handle
3. Plate head welded to metal pipe handle
4. Hatchet
5. Single Bit Axe
6. Double Bit Axe

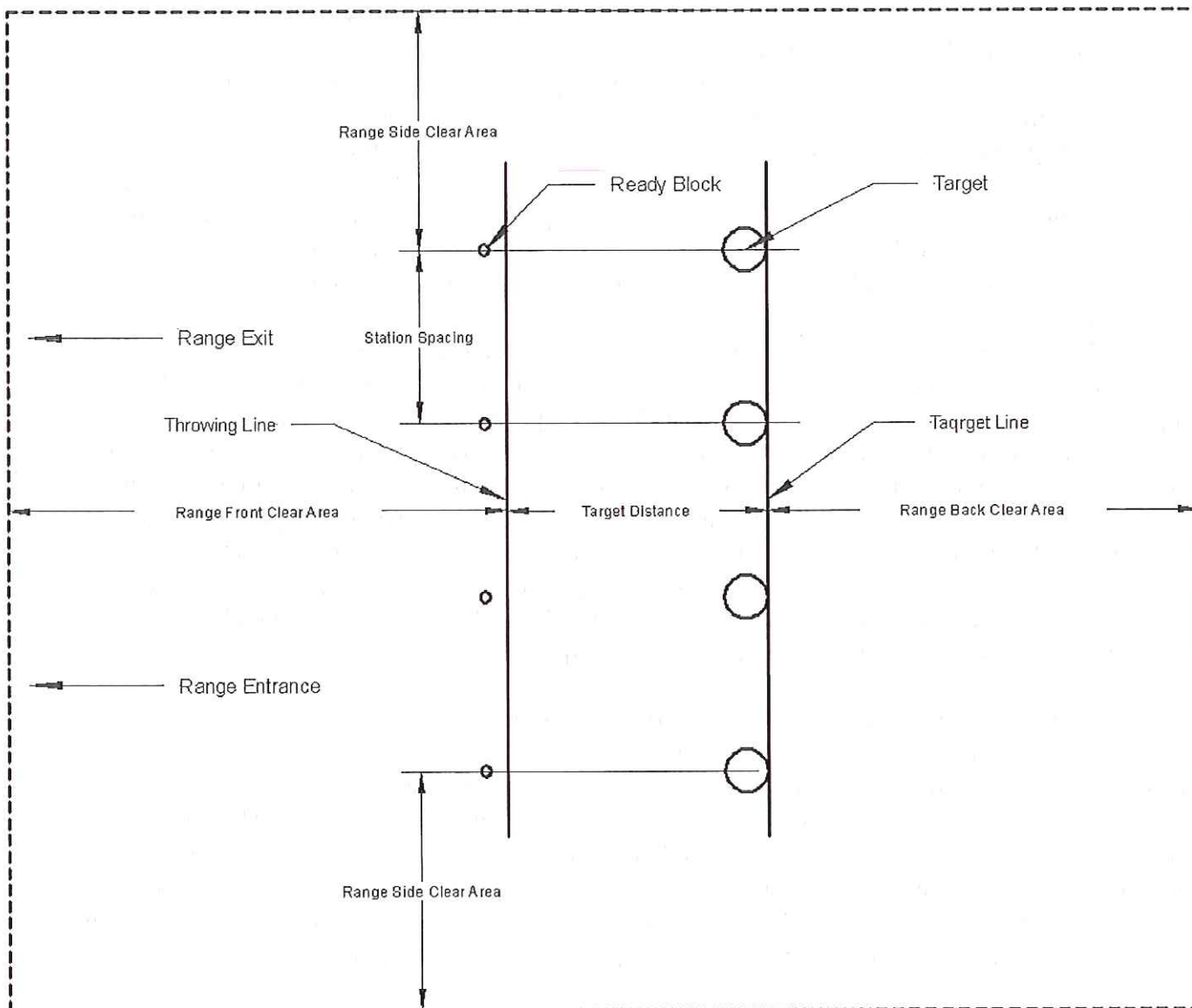
- ii. The only authorized throwing tomahawks are of types 1, 2, and 3 of section 5.b.i. Objects of type 4, 5, or 6 of section 5.b.i are not permitted to be thrown at any event.
 - iii. It is recommended that only tomahawks with wooden handles that slide into the head be used as this type is easier to keep the head tight against the handle. While tomahawks of type 3 in section 5.b.i (plate head welded to metal pipe handle) will not loosen, there is a greater chance for damage to blade surfaces when thrown, should a blade strike a handle of a previous thrown tomahawk.
 - iv. All tomahawks are to be inspected by the range personnel and sharpened before use in the event. Periodic re-inspection should occur based on the conditions of the throwing event (ground surface, misses by throwers, tomahawk striking another tomahawk on the target, etc.).
 - v. Tomahawk handles should free of splinters and splits. A handle may be wrapped with duct tape, electrical tape, or other such heavy tape if the handle becomes damaged but can be made serviceable and remain safe to use. Handles that are split or will not hold the head must be retired from service.
- c. Approved knives and tomahawks are to be provided by the range personnel coordinating the activity whenever possible. While it is desired that all of the equipment used in the event be supplied as such, it is recognized that events such as camporees may draw equipment from a number of individuals. Participants with personal knives or tomahawks may request permission to use their personal equipment. It must be recognized by the range personnel that participants may have personal equipment in any condition from better than the provided equipment in the event to completely unsafe. Permission to use any knife or tomahawk in an event is up to the discretion of the range personnel. Inspection of the equipment by the range personnel is required before it can be used in the event. It is recommended that all of the range personnel be present during the inspection and review of the participant's equipment.

6. Range Layout

- a. Range layout must conform to the local site and local conditions.
- b. Natural physical barriers (if available) are recommended to be used for the range borders.
- c. The guidelines outlined in this document are the minimum requirements.
- d. Stations shall be placed along a throwing line, targets placed along a target line. All stations under the supervision of a range master should be along the same line. If there are stations placed such that there is not a single throwing line, or they are spaced far enough apart that the range master does not have a clear view of the entire area for which the range master is responsible, the range should be split into separate ranges and a separate range master placed in charge of each split area.
- e. **Minimum Dimensions for a Knife range (see figure following)**
 - i. Station Spacing – 10 feet
 - ii. Target Distance – approximately 10 feet
 - iii. Range Front Clear Area – 20 feet
 - iv. Range Side Clear Area – 30 feet
 - v. Range Back Clear Area – 45 feet
 - vi. Distance to a Knife Range – 20 feet
 - vii. Distance to a Tomahawk Range – 40 feet

f. Minimum Dimensions for a Tomahawk range (see figure following)

- i. Station Spacing – 10 feet
- ii. Target Distance – approximately 10 feet
- iii. Range Front Clear Area – 20 feet
- iv. Range Side Clear Area – 30 feet
- v. Range back Clear Area – 75 feet
- vi. Distance to a Tomahawk Range – 20 feet
- vii. Distance to a Knife Range – 40 feet



g. Range Entrance and Exit should be positioned away from the throwing direction. Side entrances are discouraged unless they are in the corner of the Range Front Area . Entrances and Exits should be separated. No one is permitted to enter or exit the range without the permission of a range officer.

- h. All ranges must have the boundaries clearly marked with rope, cord, or other visible material, such as Caution tape. Rope and cord should have highly visible flagging tape affixed at frequent intervals to enhance the visibility of the boundary. Boundary lines should have sufficient posts or supports to ensure the boundary remains in place for the duration of the station under all weather conditions. The boundary should be inspected regularly to ensure it is in place and undamaged. Boundaries should be set approximately three feet off the ground and supports should be at intervals not to exceed twenty five (25) feet. Objects in the area, such as trees or fences may be used as boundaries, provided the access to the throwing area is controlled.
- i. Backstops are recommended for all ranges, but are not required. A backstop does not diminish the Range Back Clear Area requirement.
- j. Targets should be end grain cut logs (also known as rounds) or end grain blocks securely fixed together. Targets must be securely fastened to stands or supports so that they will be able to withstand the force of the knife or tomahawk that is throw at it. Tripod stands are recommended for use where setup and removal is required. Fixed (posts set in the ground) throwing targets or stands are recommended for longer term event stations. In all cases, the stands must be sturdy, well constructed and maintained for safety and functionality.
- k. When targets are to be used for scoring purposes, a set of concentric circles should be painted on the target. Targets may be painted with shapes other than circles provided that the object painted would be acceptable under the guidelines of the Boy Scouts of America. Under no circumstances is a human figure or any part of a human figure permitted to be a target. Other permitted targets are playing cards, paper plates, paper targets, balloons, etc. Targets should be easily pierced with the knife or tomahawk and should be fastened to the round using materials which will not adversely harm the thrown devices.
- l. All throwing stations should have a small table or round set on end where the knives or hawks may be laid between throws. Knives and tomahawks should never be stuck into this temporary device.
- m. All throwing stations should be kept clear of objects that may cause a participant to trip or fall. Throwing lines should be level and free of outcropping roots or rocks.
- n. The throwing line is a guideline as the thrower may take a step forward when throwing, or may be back a step from other throwers. As long as the thrower is within this approximate range throwing may continue. If at any time a thrower is excessively far from the line, throwing should cease and the range officer will direct the thrower to a safer position.
- o. When the knife or tomahawk area is closed, all knives and tomahawks are to be securely stored in a locked area. It is recommended that all knives and tomahawks have blade guards in place during transport to and from storage. All knives and tomahawks should be inspected prior to storage and after removal from storage. Any found unfit for use should be clearly marked or moved so that they will not be used until they can be made fit for use.

7. Operation of the Range.

a. Range Commands

- i. Range command for Knife and Tomahawk ranges are to be the same.
- ii. Range commands are to be spoken clearly and loudly. All participants are to be given a review of the range commands to be used before any throwing can begin.
- iii. Range commands are of two types, those that concern a group and those that pertain the entire range. Range commands that control the entire range should be acknowledged by every member of the range personnel. For example, if one of the range personnel declares Range Closed, all other range personnel should respond with Range Closed.
- iv. Range Commands must be spoken clearly and in the direction of the participants.
- v. Range personnel controlling adjacent ranges must coordinate their group commands to ensure the range remains safe.

vi. The following are the basic range commands.

1. Commence Throwing
 - a. Group Command
 - b. Gives permission to the group to start throwing
2. Cease Throwing
 - a. Group Command
 - b. Tells all participants to stop throwing immediately
3. Range Open
 - a. Entire Range Command
 - b. Declares that the range is considered safe to proceed to throwing stage, but does not give permission to throw.
4. Range Closed
 - a. Entire Range Command
 - b. Declares the range is closed for throwing. All throwing must cease. This command may be given with or without a preceding or following Cease Throwing command. It is recommended that Cease Throwing command be given in conjunction with the Range Closed command whenever possible.
5. Retrieve your hawks
 - a. Group Command
 - b. Tells all participants that they may retrieve their tomahawks from the target area. This command must be coordinated with adjacent ranges to ensure that one group is not throwing while another is retrieving.
6. Retrieve your knives
 - a. Group Command
 - b. Tells all participants that they may retrieve their knives from the target area. This command must be coordinated with adjacent ranges to ensure that one group is not throwing while another is retrieving.
7. Exit Range
 - a. Group Command
 - b. Tells all participants to exit the range

b. Knives:

- i. Only authorized knives may be used for throwing.
- ii. All knives will be thrown by the handle only.
- iii. The only authorized throw is a single knife in an overhand throw, not sideways, underhand or any other method, nor any multiple knives at the same time throws.
- iv. No one will step over the throwing line until given permission by the range officer in charge of a set of throwing stations. Range officers of adjacent stations must coordinate their stations activities so that all participants keep clear of the throwing area while any station is still throwing.
- v. Any violation of the rules, commands, or safe handling of the knives may result in the immediate removal of the participant from the range.
- vi. Any range officer has the discretion to remove anyone at any time for any reason from the range.
- vii. Safety is the most important factor in the operation of the range and anything that detracts from it is cause for immediate action to correct the concern.
- viii. Knives will be aimed only at the designated target. If the event involves objects on the target (such as playing cards on the round), there must be separate objects and a separate target for each participant. Objects on the target are to be such that the knife will not be caused to react in an unsafe manner when the object is struck by the knife in any manner.
- ix. No one is permitted to enter or leave the range without the permission of a range officer.

x. A throwing session shall consist of the following steps

1. Before a group of participants may enter the range, the area is clear and participants are waiting outside the site.
2. The range officers verify that the range is ready to receive participants. All deficiencies are to be corrected before any participants enter the area.
3. Participants are given permission to enter. The participants are instructed to walk to the open stations. Participants should leave any extra gear away from the throwing station.
4. A check for left handed throwers is to be made. Any left handed throwers are to be moved to the left stations of the throwing area. All right handed throwers are to be on the right stations of the throwing area. Under no circumstances should a left handed thrower be to the right of a right handed thrower.
5. All throwers are to be reminded that all knives are to be left on the block before them until they are given permission to throw.
6. Using an end throwing station, the range officer instructs the throwers as to the proper and permitted technique for throwing. Regardless of the claimed ability of the participant, the participants must listen as the rules and techniques are reviewed.
 - a. Throwing is very much like throwing a baseball
 - b. The stance used is at the discretion of the thrower. Some throwers prefer to stand with both feet fixed in place during the throw, others prefer to take a step, some leading with the right foot, others with the left. There is no single correct or preferred way.
 - c. Grip the knife as you would grip a plate, fingers not curled under the handle, but down the side, thumb to the opposite side. The grip should be firm. The throw is not performed by turning or flicking the wrist, but rather by moving the arm in a sweeping arc using the shoulder and the elbow.
 - d. Raise the knife vertically and slightly to the back in a steady manner. Do not raise it quickly or stop sharply on the uptake as neither of these will help the throw and either will cause the throw to be off considerably. Remind the throwers to keep a firm grip on the knife at all times
 - e. Once the knife is raised, pause and then bring the knife forward in a motion much like throwing a baseball. Release the knife when the hand is aiming at the target. Follow through on the throw by keeping the hand aimed toward the target.
 - f. If the knife does not hit and stick (point into the target) adjust the throwing position rather than adjusting the way the knife was thrown. If the knife was over rotated (the handle is above the point when it strikes the target, move closer to the target. If the knife is under rotated (the handle is below the point when it strikes the target, move away from the target.
7. After all participants understand the rules and techniques, the range officer can give permission to commence throwing. Throwers are to throw one knife at a time, however all throwers may throw at the same time.
8. When all throwers have thrown all of their knives, the throwers must wait for permission from the range officer before retrieving the knives. Retrieved knives are to be placed carefully flat down on the block at the throwing line. Knives are not to be placed point down or stuck into the block at the throwing line.
9. A throwing session should consist of a practice round to give the throwers a chance to adjust their throwing distance. Rounds that count toward points are at the discretion of the event.

10. After all rounds in a throwing session are complete, the range officer gives permission to leave the range, reminding the participants to collect all belongings. New participants are not permitted to enter the range until the previous group has completely exited.

c. Tomahawks:

- i. Only authorized tomahawks may be used for throwing.
- ii. All tomahawks will be thrown by the handle only.
- iii. The only authorized throw is a single tomahawk in an overhand throw, not sideways, underhand or any other method, nor any multiple tomahawks at the same time throws.
- iv. No one will step over the throwing line until given permission by the range officer in charge of a set of throwing stations. Range officers of adjacent stations must coordinate their stations activities so that all participants keep clear of the throwing area while any station is still throwing.
- v. Any violation of the rules, commands, or safe handling of the tomahawks may result in the immediate removal of the participant from the range.
- vi. Any range officer has the discretion to remove anyone at any time for any reason from the range.
- vii. Safety is the most important factor in the operation of the range and anything that detracts from it is cause for immediate action to correct the concern.
- viii. Tomahawks will be aimed only at the designated target. If the event involves objects on the target (such as playing cards on the round), there must be separate objects and a separate target for each participant. Objects on the target are to be such that the tomahawk will not be caused to react in an unsafe manner when the object is struck by the tomahawk in any manner.
- ix. No one is permitted to enter or leave the range without the permission of a range officer.
- x. A throwing session shall consist of the following steps
 1. Before a group of participants may enter the range, the area is clear and participants are waiting outside the site.
 2. The range officers verify that the range is ready to receive participants. All deficiencies are to be corrected before any participants enter the area.
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 5. All throwers are to be reminded that all tomahawks are to be left on the block before them until they are given permission to throw.
 6. Using an end throwing station, the range officer instructs the throwers as to the proper and permitted technique for throwing. Regardless of the claimed ability of the participant, the participants must listen as the rules and techniques are reviewed.
 - a. Throwing is very much like throwing a baseball
 - b. The stance used is at the discretion of the thrower. Some throwers prefer to stand with both feet fixed in place during the throw, others prefer to take a step, some leading with the right foot, others with the left. There is no single correct or preferred way.

- c. Grip the tomahawk as you would grip a hammer, fingers not curled under the handle, but down the side, thumb to the opposite side. The grip should be firm. The throw is not performed by turning or flicking the wrist, but rather by moving the arm in a sweeping arc using the shoulder and the elbow.
 - d. To begin a throw, point the tomahawk toward the target. Raise the tomahawk vertically and slightly to the back in a steady manner without fully bending the elbow. Do not raise it quickly or stop sharply as neither of these will help the throw and either will cause the throw to be off considerably. Inform the throwers to keep a firm grip on the tomahawk at all times
 - e. Once the tomahawk is raised, pause and then bring the tomahawk forward in a motion much like throwing a baseball. Release the tomahawk when the hand is aiming at the target. Follow through on the throw by keeping the hand aimed toward the target. Take care not to twist or flick the wrist as this may cause the tomahawk to travel with too much spin or it may have a sideways twist.
 - f. Power and speed are not required to throw or stick the tomahawk. Tomahawks will naturally turn in flight to the target and increases in speed or power add to the difficulty in controlling the throw, not to the accuracy of the throw. The greatest motion is in the shoulder, then the elbow and least in the wrist.
 - g. If the tomahawk does not hit and stick (point into the target) adjust the throwing position rather than adjusting the way the tomahawk was thrown. If the tomahawk was over rotated (the handle is above the point when it strikes the target, move closer to the target. If the tomahawk is under rotated (the handle is below the point when it strikes the target, move away from the target.
7. After all participants understand the rules and techniques, the range officer can give permission to commence throwing. Throwers are to throw one tomahawk at a time, however all throwers may throw at the same time.
 8. When all throwers have thrown all of their tomahawks, the throwers must wait for permission from the range officer before retrieving the tomahawks. Retrieved tomahawks are to be placed carefully flat down on the block at the throwing line. Tomahawks are not to be placed point down or stuck into the block at the throwing line.
 9. The range officer should inspect any tomahawk whose head has become loose. Additionally, if a handle and head are completely separated, the range officer and not the thrower is to reassemble the tomahawk. Handles of tomahawks are to be periodically inspected for splits, splinters, nicks, and cuts. If damage to a handle of head can not be easily repaired, the tomahawk is to be removed from use until it is repaired.
 10. A throwing session should consist of a practice round to give the throwers a chance to adjust their throwing distance. Rounds that count toward points are at the discretion of the event.
 11. After all rounds in a throwing session are complete, the range officer gives permission to leave the range, reminding the participants to collect all belongings. New participants are not permitted to enter the range until the previous group has completely exited.

8. Training

- a. Operation of a range requires training. All range personnel are to be trained before any range can be opened for participants.
- b. Training shall consist of two parts
 - i. Review and understanding of the Knife and Tomahawk Throwing Policies and Procedures (this document).
 1. Range Masters must participate in an organized training session and receive a certificate of training before they are permitted by council to operate a range. This training shall be known as Safe Throwing Training (see section following).
 2. Experienced Range Masters may train other Range Masters provided it is done in an organized training session.
 3. Organized training session shall consist of a thorough review of the Knife and Tomahawk Throwing Policies and Procedures (this document).
 4. Assistant Range Officers are to be trained by a trained Range Master..
 - ii. Review of the range and equipment at the time of the event.
 1. Each range and group throwing area is different. All range personnel should be familiar with all aspects of the range and group throwing areas.
 2. Specific range duties should be discussed and agreed to by all range personnel before the range is opened.
 3. Range Command should be reviewed before the range is opened.

9. Safe Throwing Training

- a. Safe Throwing Training is intended for all personnel who will be involved in operating and tomahawk or knife throwing range, either for a unit, district, council, camp or other level activity.
- b. Safe Throwing Training has the following key elements:
 1. Qualified Supervision
 - a. All throwing activities are to be supervised by a Range Master Officer who must be a trained, mature, and conscientious adult twenty one (21) years of age or older.
 - b. Each group of four throwing stations must be staffed by a trained, mature, and conscientious Range Assistant Officer who must be sixteen (16) years of age or older
 2. Ability
 - a. All throwers must have the physical strength and manual dexterity required to safely throw.
 3. Equipment
 - a. All equipment used on the range must be regularly inspected and in safe working condition.
 4. Discipline
 - a. All participants should know and understand the rules and procedures for a safe throwing activity. Rules for safety do not interfere with fun when fairly applied
 5. Range Layout
 - a. The throwing range must be arranged for the safety of the participants and the spectators. Careful review of the site, natural physical barriers, and traffic patterns is necessary both before and during the operation of the event.
 - b. A safe range is a fun range, because more throwers can participate and more people can watch.

