

Safety at the Chicago River

A field trip to the river should be a fun and safe experience for teachers and students. Here are a few safety tips to make your trip enjoyable.

Clothing

- **All students must wear long pants and close-toed shoes that they don't mind getting dirty.** Encountering mud and prickly plants and walking on dirt trails is likely so proper dress is very important.

Canceling Field Trips

- **Field trips will be cancelled if lightening is sighted, if there is severe flooding at the field trip site, or if other hazardous conditions exist.** Otherwise field trips will continue rain or shine. Come prepared for the weather.

Prevent bacteria from entering your body

The Chicago River is much cleaner than it used to be but it still nowhere clean enough to drink.

- **Do not enter or touch the water if you have open cuts or sores.** Bacteria levels can run you the risk of having your wound get infected.
- **No food is allowed while you are working.** You need to wait until lunchtime to eat anything. This includes chips and candy. If you are not having lunch on the trip, no food is allowed until you leave on the bus. If you eat while you are coming in contact with the water you run the risk of ingesting bacteria.
- **Wash your hands before you eat lunch** or if you are not eating lunch on the trip, before you leave. Bring hand sanitizer or wipes as bathroom are not always well equipped or available.
- **Take care not to rub your eyes or put your fingers in your mouth** after coming in contact with the water. These areas serve as an entry point for bacteria.

Protect yourself from falls

- **Stand back from the banks of the river;** the banks can be steep and slippery in places. The place where you enter the water will be designated as a place that is safe to go in.
- **No students are allowed in the water without the permission and supervision** of their teacher and Friends of the Chicago River staff.
- **Students will not be allowed in the water if water levels are high** (higher than knee to mid-thigh on the students).
- **Friends reserves the right to ask any student to exit the water at any time.**

General smarts

- **Bring a first aid kit.** Friends of the Chicago River has kits you may borrow.
- **Every 10-15 students should have one chaperone.** Know the people in your group. Groups should stay together, in view of their chaperone at all times, and use the buddy system.
- **Know how to identify poison ivy and stinging nettle and don't touch them.** It's no fun to "experiment" to see if touching these plants really irritates the skin. Friends of the Chicago River can assure you - they do!

Have fun! Don't let these safety rules scare you. Just be careful, like you would for any other field trip!