



Our Updated Safety Standards

A summary of the changes we've made for Summer Camp 2026

The families of our campers place an enormous amount of trust in us to keep their loved ones safe. Recent events in the camp world have given us occasion to take a careful look at how we keep campers and staff safe on site, and to take several new steps in line with recent legislation in Texas.

Why we did this

The tragic loss of life in a flash flood at Camp Mystic prompted the State of Texas to pass the most significant overhaul of camp safety law in its history. Known collectively as the Heaven's 27 Camp Safety Act, the new law addresses many aspects of safety procedure and policy including: severe weather response, redundant emergency communications, drilled response, and honest disclosure to families.

Florida is not Texas. Cedarkirk is not in a federally designated floodplain, and the specific geography that produced the Camp Mystic tragedy is not our geography. We are not bound by these new standards. But we chose to adopt them anyway, adapted to our Florida context – our hurricanes, our summer thunderstorms, our lightning, our river – because the disciplines they require are disciplines we want to practice.

What changed

The new standards touch five areas of how we operate.

How we monitor severe weather

We have invested in new lightning detection, supplemented by NOAA weather radios. We continuously monitor National Weather Service alerts, river-authority gauges, and Hillsborough County emergency notifications. When conditions are changing, we know it before the storm arrives.

How we act on warnings

When the National Weather Service issues a tornado, severe thunderstorm, flash flood, hurricane, or wildfire warning that includes our location, we move to shelter immediately, regardless of how the sky looks at that moment. Our lightning protocol has moved to an objective standard: suspend activities at the first close lightning, resume only after the last detected lightning or audible thunder. Most important, a written decision matrix clearly names the resulting action for every kind of warning, and any staff member of any rank has standing authority to call shelter on a credible threat.

How we account for every camper

We have named and mapped primary and secondary muster zones for every emergency type, as well as designated buildings for severe weather threats like tornados. Counselors carry printed Camper



Roster Cards and report accountability by name – not by headcount – at every muster. "All accounted for" is a sentence we must earn, not assume.

How we prepare our staff and campers

We have formalized annual emergency response training for all summer staff before the first camper arrives. Severe weather drills, an annual hurricane preparedness drill, and a tabletop exercise are included in our preparation for emergency events. Within 24 hours of arrival, every camper is oriented to on-site hazards and what to do if a warning is issued in a developmentally appropriate format.

How we communicate with you

We have created a Safety Practices & Site Hazards disclosure that every family will review during online registration and is posted publicly on this website. We have designated an Emergency Preparedness Coordinator who owns this work year-round, and who is responsible for maintaining a centralized Compliance Binder documenting training, drills, after-action reports, and recommendations, which is reviewed annually by the Executive Director and presented in summary to the Board of Directors each fall.

What hasn't changed

Portions of our Emergency Action Plan and Risk Management policies already meet or exceed the standards set forth in the Heaven's 27 legislation and remain unchanged. Many sections only require more documentation or written records to be stored in the Compliance Binder. Cedarkirk is still a place apart, doing the same work of welcoming, community building, and faith formation it has always done. The disciplines described here are not a change of mission: they are strengthening the foundation that makes our mission possible.

Questions or concerns?

If you have questions about any of these standards – new or old, please reach out to the Executive Director directly. Our full Emergency Action Plan and Camper Safeguarding Policy are available on request.

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