

Advancement News

At the beginning of each year changes to Rank and Merit Badges requirements are announced. Some years these requirements may very minor and some years they may be major and can have a great impact on your scouting programs. As scouting volunteers, we need to stay current with these changes and ensure that current requirements are used, when a cub or boy scout starts to work on a new advancement. Most times if a youth has started to work on a rank advancement or merit badge they are complete these under the old requirements, but not always. Always consult the current Requirements Publications to verify.

A great way to stay current on advancement issues is Advancement News published around six time a year. Copies of with can be found at www.scouting.org/advancement. Some highlights from the January-February 2017 are:

Cub Scout program modifications,

A year after the new program was implemented, recommendations from the field have been implemented to make the program more flexible for Cub Scouts and their leaders. These modifications are designed to keep those Cub Scouts in the program and have them be successful in advancement. It is hoped that as leaders and parents embrace these changes the Cub Scout program will continue to provide quality experiences for Cub Scouts for many years to come. The new program modifications may be found at [www.scouting.org/filestore/cubscouts/pdf/CubScout Advancement Modifications.pdf](http://www.scouting.org/filestore/cubscouts/pdf/CubScout_Advancement_Modifications.pdf). The modified adventures and their respective requirements may be used with the current handbooks; relevant changes to handbook content will take place in subsequent editions.

Clarification on Statement of Religious Belief for Eagle

Effective January 1, 2016, the statement “Tell how you have done your duty to God...” was incorporated into all Boy Scout rank requirements from Tenderfoot through Eagle Scout, including those for Eagle Palms. Each Scout is expected to “tell” how he has done his duty to God, but not to demonstrate, discuss, show, or prove it otherwise. He especially is not required to provide a written “Statement of Religious Belief” (or any other document with a similar title) in order to meet this requirement.

Nevertheless, some councils, districts, or even units are recommending—and some are requiring—that Scouts include such a statement with their Eagle Scout Rank Applications as a condition for meeting the religious reference portion of requirement #2. This is adding to the requirements and is contrary to the National policy to do so. All each Scout is required to do is to provide contact information for a religious reference. In cases where the Scout is not affiliated with an organized religion, he may use his parent(s)/guardian as his religious reference—it is up to them how they respond to the reference request. They cannot be required to submit a “Statement of Religious Belief” or any other written correspondence on behalf of their son any more than can any of the other references the Scout has provided.

To be clear on this point, councils, districts, and units must immediately stop even recommending that Scouts provide such statements of belief in order for their Eagle Scout rank applications to be

processed. The argument that they are not “requiring” but only “recommending” such a statement be included is not valid. The fact that such a “recommendation” has come from someone in a position of authority infers that there is a formal expectation that such a statement be included, which is the same as requiring it. To avoid misunderstandings and Eagle Scout Rank Application processing delays, councils, districts, and units should eliminate any reference to such statements of belief, either from Scouts or parents.

An excellent discussion on this new requirement that explained how it was intended to be a monologue by the Scout and not a dialogue between a Scout and his leader was provided in the *Bryan on Scouting* blog in November 2015. The full article still can be found here and is well worth being revisited: <http://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2015/11/02/beginning-next-year-boy-scouts-will-discuss-duty-to-god-at-each-rank/>.