



National Court of Honor Planning Guide

Congratulations! You have the rare opportunity to conduct a National Court of Honor for a person from your pack or troop.

There are only a handful of nationally awarded recognitions, hence a few reasons a National Court of Honor is conducted. Among these are the Eagle Scout Rank, Medal of Merit (or Meritorious Award) and the Heroism Medal.

Less than ten meritorious action awards are usually awarded in the Viking Council each year. This is a special occasion – worthy of careful planning. Please involve your district advancement committee in your plan – these experienced Scouters are ready and willing to assist wherever you need help! Your unit commissioner has their name and telephone number(s) and can help contact them.

This booklet is a guide to planning and conducting the event. Please read it over carefully and then draft your own plan. Then put it in writing with a copy to everyone concerned. Good communication is essential to a successful National Court of Honor.

NATIONAL COURT OF HONOR PLANNING GUIDEPREPARING THE PLAN

A National Court of Honor is conducted for the presentation of a National Award only. Please don't plan to present other awards at this event.

A few items to include in your plan are:

- Location
- Guest List
- Media Coverage
- Rehearsal
- The Ceremony
- Reception

Let's look at these one at a time.

LOCATION

You'll need a space large enough for everyone in your group and special guests. If your unit is chartered by a church, try to reserve the sanctuary – it usually has a sound system and has a raised front to place the award recipient. If you choose a school, try for the auditorium, or at least a room with a stage.

GUEST LIST

On such a special occasion, you'll want to invite guests to witness the presentation. Here are some ideas – you may formally invite them (printed or typed invitation) or invite them by word-of-mouth.

- Family and friends
- Cub Scout pack & pack committee
- Boy Scout troop & troop committee
- Chartering Organization leadership
- Government: mayor, council members, state senators and representatives, etc.
- School: friends, teachers, principal
- Church: friends, pastor, teachers
- Scouting: Viking Council Scout Executive, Council President, Council Commissioner, District Director/Executive, District Chairman, District Commissioner, Unit Commissioner
- Photographer
- Media

MEDIA COVERAGE

An award for saving life is NEWS! Send a photocopy of the citation, a copy of your ceremony plan, and the invitation to these:

- Your community newspaper
- Your community radio station, if you have one
- Recipient's (or parents) employers
- Television stations
- Major newspapers (Minneapolis Star & Tribune Community Section)

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MEDIA COVERAGE (cont.)

If, for whatever reason, your community newspaper cannot be present at the actual ceremony, PLAN AHEAD and have someone take a couple of good sharp photographs (keeping track of each person's name and address) and get these, along with a ceremony description, to the newspaper *as soon as possible* after the ceremony. Releases provided to newspapers are much more likely to be printed if a good picture is included.

Television stations usually appreciate a short telephoned reminder the morning of the ceremony. When you call, ask for the News Department.

REHEARSAL

It goes without saying that everything should be practiced – and this is no exception. Gather everyone that has a part in the ceremony (include the photographer...who'll need to check positions and lighting) and run through the entire program. If it's shakey- do it until everyone feels okay.

Here are some items to check during rehearsal:

- Lighting
- Sound system
- Building heat (cooling)
- Seating
- Stage props (tables, chairs)
- Ceremony script

THE CEREMONY

Here are some key elements in an awards ceremony – write yours to fit your situation.

1. Master of Ceremonies calls group to order.
2. Flag presentation by Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts.
3. Invocation by member of clergy. (If location is a church, be sure to invite the head minister to do this.)
4. Introduction of guests (make sure that they're present before announcing their names!) - you may want them to take their seats on the stage at this time.
5. Introduction of rescued person.
6. Introduction of award recipient & parents.
7. Explanation of National Court of Honor and the Meritorious Award being presented.
8. Award presentation – readings, award presentations, medal pinnings, etc. can be done by guests, parents, rescued person – have the appropriate person do it.
9. Guest speaker's short talk (ten minutes at most).
10. Other presentations or short talks (limit to three minutes).
11. Award presentation
 - Have recipient stand
 - Have citation read
 - Pin medal on left pocket flap of uniform
 - Present embroidered square knot (where appropriate)
 - Present citation
12. Thanks to all for coming, and announcement of how the reception will be handled.
13. Close of National Court of Honor – may wish to retire colors and have benediction.

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RECEPTION

It's nice to have light refreshments available after the ceremony – and give everyone a chance to personally congratulate the award recipient. This can be handled by the recipient's family or the pack or troop committee.

PLAN EXECUTION

Now that you have written a plan, you're on your way to a successful National Court of Honor. Here are some tips:

- Recruit others – it's more that one person can handle, and a lot more fun if you involve many other people. Divide up the total job into many little tasks. Then ask people to do specific things.
- Let them know exactly what to do – put it in writing, and don't forget who, what, when, where, why and how!
- Use your district and council advancement committees – they've been through this before and can really help.
- This may be the only meritorious award that your pack or troop may ever have. Time spent to do it right is a good investment.
- It is a good idea to have at least one video camera capture the event. The combined footage can be edited together and this is a memory to be preserved.

NOTES ON WEARING THE MEDAL

The medal is worn above the left pocket and pinned to the uniform immediately above the seam of the left pocket flap.

Wear a Medal of Merit or Heroism Medal to the right of any other medals, and only on ceremonial occasions.

The embroidered knot is sewn above the left pocket and can be worn at all times. The Eagle Rank knot is worn on an adult uniform only.

Please keep in mind that there are additional resources you may use:

- Decorations (banners) for check-out at the Council Service Center
 - Eagle Light Box and Ceremony available at the Council Service Center
 - Troop Program Features available in the Scout Shop
 - www.scouter.com www.vikingbsa.org
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