

Chapter 14—Early Warning Signals

Airplanes, police cars, and ships at sea all have built-in radar systems to provide early warning of things just over the horizon. Commissioners also have built-in radar of sorts to get advance signals of good and bad conditions in every unit. Alert unit commissioners to check these indicators constantly—using them to head off disaster if the signals are bad and to commend unit people if the signals are good. Here are a few signals you might build into your staff’s early-warning radar:

Good Signals	Danger Signals
Meetings well-attended	Irregular meetings
Program planned in advance	No written program
Good advancement	Little advancement
Fully uniformed unit	Few in uniform
Good participation in council-district events	Seldom seen outside their unit
Frequent outdoor activities	Little outdoor program, no camping
Support FOS program	No FOS participation
Attend roundtables	Never attend roundtables
Constant membership growth	No new members
Strong unit committee	Unit leaders work alone
Excellent parent support	No parent involvement
Unit recharter on time	Unit charter lapses
Strong boy leadership	Unit leader does all the leading
Good relationship with chartered organization	Mistrust between chartered organization and its unit Scouters
Assistant unit leader (and den leaders in packs)	Only one active leader

Good Signals	Danger Signals
Having fun	Lack of discipline
Unit leader always available	Unit leader hard to find
Leader trained	Very little leader training

Unit commissioners are not the only ones with radar. Those they serve, unit leaders, have some signals of their own about commissioners. Here are a few:

Good Signals	Danger Signals
They are always there if needed	Commissioners? What’s a commissioner?
They keep their word	They always want something
They can get help for me anytime	They interrupt my meetings
They keep me posted	They are never there when you need them
We get good ideas from them	I can’t depend on them
They are great help at unit committee meetings	All they do is wear red jackets and drink coffee
“Great guy, Bill . . . don’t know what I’d do without him.”	“I wish that guy’d get off my back. . . .”

Help your commissioners check signals on themselves. To the above, add signals you learn from your own experience. You might not “hear” what your associates say, but their actions usually speak louder than their words.