

Camping Season

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018

A6



Pick out the mistakes these campers are making regarding campfire safety.

Emphasize safety when swapping stories around the campfire

Camping is a popular and fun way to enjoy the great outdoors. For families vacationing on a budget, camping provides an affordable alternative to costly resorts and hotels. No camping trip is complete without spending some time around a campfire. But as fun as swapping stories around the campfire can be, campfires can also pose a safety risk.

When building a campfire, campers can

employ the following approach to ensure everyone enjoys a safe night around the fire.

MAKE SURE THE FIRE IS OUT

When breaking down the campsite, completely extinguish the fire before leaving.

Move stones and spread out embers and ash so that all heat can dissipate. Do not leave until the remains of the campfire are cool to the touch.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPOT

Select a location that

is on level ground and clear any obstructions or flammable items from the area before starting the fire.

Be sure to look above you to make sure there are no low-hanging branches that may fall into the fire and ignite, putting campers at risk of injury.

ENSURE WATER IS NEARBY

Have bottled water available or choose a campsite that is in close proximity to a water source. This ensures you can douse the fire

or cool coals if need be.

CHECK THE FIRE DANGER LEVEL

Many parks and campsites will post a warning level on signage indicating whether dry conditions can contribute to fast-expanding fires. When a high fire warning has been issued, it may be wise to avoid campfires altogether.

USE EXISTING FIRE PIT RINGS

Many campsites have fire rings in place. This

serves to keep the fire contained in a safe manner. The best place to build a fire is within an existing fire ring in a well-placed campsite. If there is no ring, create your own barrier with rocks, stones and sand. Keep flammable material outside of a 10-foot diameter circle.

STAY CLOSE TO THE FIRE SO LONG AS IT IS BURNING

Never walk away from a lit fire. Even a small breeze can cause the fire to spread quickly, so stay near until it

dissipates or you extinguish it.

DO NOT USE ACCELERANTS

Light wood or coals with matches or a lighter or use a flint fire starter kit. Never douse the materials in lighter fluid or gasoline to get the blaze going.

Campfires can be both fun and practical when camping out. But always keep safety in mind and exercise considerable caution when choosing where and when to light fires.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Fueling an indoor or outdoor wood-burning fire requires plenty of wood. That means having ample firewood at the ready and, perhaps more importantly, keeping that wood dry. Storing wood so it remains dry and ready to use can involve different strategies.

For starters, it is important to keep firewood off the ground. Wood that comes in contact with soil creates a natural habitat for organisms that consume wood, including insects, bacteria and fungi. A basic wood-storing structure can keep wood off of the floor. It's also important to know whether your wood is green or currently wet.

To burn efficiently, firewood needs to be dry. Wet wood needs ample circulation to dry out, and green wood (wood that has been recently cut) needs time to dry out and become seasoned. Therefore, people should resist the urge to completely cover wood piles; otherwise, air cannot reach the wood.

Circulation is important for dry, seasoned wood. A tarp that covers the top of the wood and allows rain water to cascade down but still enables breezes to blow through the firewood is ideal. Moisture will also be able to escape, and the tarp will keep the majority of the wood dry in the process.

Similarly, stack the wood away from a wall or other surface, even if that is another stack of wood. This will also facilitate air circulation. While most people store dried wood outside, if there is room in a shed, move the wood inside.

Just be sure the building has good air circulation, and be aware that firewood creates a good habitat for rodents and other pests.

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