

CHAPTER 2 - FIRE SAFETY - Campfires

CAMPFIRE SAFETY

When people go camping we all like to have campfires as it is part of the overall camping experience. Campfires can be used to heat, light, cooking and conversational gathering points. In all these cases we are drawn to the camp fire. Some basic rules of nature that one needs to be aware of:

- 1 – Heat rises
- 2 – Wind blows heat and smoke
- 3 – Heat and Light decrease the farther you are away from the source

Distance

Safety when around a campfire is all about distance. The closer we are to the fire the warmer the fire feels and the warmer we get. If we get too close to the fire we can get burned. The rule of thumb for distance from a campfire is we sit and stand at least 6 feet away from the camp fire. Another rule is to sit away from the campfire the same distance as the distance is across the fire pit. The bigger the fire pit, the bigger the fire and therefore the farther we need to be away from the fire.

Never walk between someone seated by the campfire and the fire itself. This will put you too close to the fire and at risk to get hurt.

Smoke

Have you ever seen someone rubbing their eyes because they got smoke in them? This is a very dangerous situation. The person with the smoke in their eyes cannot see. They are usually close to the fire and therefore at risk of being hurt by the fire.

Smoke rises and originates from the fire as a product of incomplete combustion. Smoke as tiny particles in it. These particles are what make the smoke gray or black in color. These particles are what cause the irritation in one's eyes.

Smoke gets blown by the wind. If you are sitting or standing downwind from the fire, the wind will blow the smoke at you. You will need to move or you will be at risk of smoke related problems.

Safety While Cooking

We usually use the campfires for cooking and to effectively cook over a campfire it has to have a lot of coals. Coals are the hottest part of the fire. Coals give off little smoke but a lot of heat. A byproduct of cooking is smoke from the grease from the food we are cooking. Since we are cooking over the fire we will have to be very close to the fire. The person doing the cooking needs to have space in order to cook and cook safely around the camp fire. Never stand behind the person cooking as you trap that person between you and the fire leaving that person no room to escape if they would get smoke in their eyes or worse. Always approach the person cooking in full view of the person. Do NOT sneak up, or come up behind the person cooking as you can scare that person and he could trip and fall into the fire pit.

General Rules of Campfire Safety

- 1 – Sit or stand at least 6 feet away from the fire
- 2 – Do not sit or stand where the wind is blowing the smoke from the fire
- 3 – Never come up behind or stand behind the person cooking at a campfire
- 4 – Never walk between a person sitting at a campfire and the campfire
- 5 – Never run when near (within 20 feet) of a campfire

Extinguishing a campfire

The most dangerous task one can have is to extinguish a campfire. The following steps must be followed in order to extinguish a campfire safely.

- 1 – Make sure you have a water source of at least 10 gallons of water
- 2 – The fire needs to be laying flat in the fire pit.
- 3 – Locate a section of the fire pit where there are few coals or embers
- 4 – Prepare to start pouring the water into the fire pit at this location
- 5 – Do NOT lean over the fire pit while you pour the water into the fire pit. Steam will billow out of the pit and will burn you!
- 6 – SLOWLY pour the water into the fire pit. If steam billows out, stop pouring and step back. Let the water all turn to steam and then start pouring again.
- 7 – Continue pouring from this point and gradually extend the pour all across the fire pit. You may have to walk around the pit to extinguish all the hot spots.
- 8 – Pour water into the fire pit so there is standing water in the pit.
- 9 – Stir the water into the fire pit to ensure all the coals are out.
- 10 – Continue stirring and adding water until no more steam is coming out of the pit.