

# CAMPFIRE INFORMATION

## *Group Leaders need to be aware of safe fire practices*

As the old proverb states, "Fire is a good servant, but a bad master." For peace of mind in the outdoors, make sure your campfire is a good servant when camping.

## **SAFETY**

Use risk management strategies at all times

- Check local conditions
- It is recommended that participants be at least 3 metres from the flame
- No running around the fire.
- Be aware that ash is hot and can burn for at least 12-18 hrs after the fire has burned out, if the fire is not extinguished properly.
- Have a bucket of water, or sand, or even a shovel close by, just in case the fire gets away on you
- Stack extra wood upwind and away from the fire.
- Never leave a campfire unattended, not even for a minute.
- Never build a campfire on a windy day. Sparks and other burning material could travel large distances.
- It may be tempting to get a roaring fire going, but try to keep your fire to a reasonable and manageable size.

## **FACILITATING THE ACTIVITY**

### 1. Preparing Your Campfire Area

Use the designated campfire area.

Before you begin building your campfire, make sure you have equipment on hand to extinguish your fire. You will need a large bucket of water and a shovel. Keep these things close enough to your fire pit that they are quickly accessible in an emergency. If the ground around your campsite is too hard to shovel, also keep a bucket of sand or dirt nearby.

### 2. Safely Igniting Your Campfire

Avoid using lighter fluid or other chemicals to start your fire. These fuels are dangerous to use in the wilderness. They can unexpectedly flare up and catch your clothing on fire. Instead just use a lighter or match to ignite your kindling. Do not discard any used matches until they are cool to the touch.

It can be tempting to build a large bonfire instead of a reasonably sized campfire. Resist the temptation and put safety first. A large fire will emit more potentially hazardous sparks. These sparks from a large fire are capable of drifting further away than sparks from a small fire. Also it can be much more difficult to extinguish a large fire.

### 3. Maintaining a Safe Campfire

While your campfire is burning, never leave it unattended! Despite other safety precautions, your campfire could spread from your fire pit. You need to be around to ensure your campfire doesn't spread.

Be careful of what you burn in your campfire. Try to stick to manageable pieces of firewood that easily fit within your fire pit. It is not a good idea to burn large logs that stick out past your fire pit. Also avoid burning fresh branches that give off excess sparks.

### 4. Properly Extinguishing Your Campfire

Before you go to sleep or when you leave the campsite, you must fully extinguish your campfire. First, douse the flames by pouring water on the fire. You are not done yet though. Just because you can't see flames, it does not mean the fire cannot reignite itself. There are usually still hot embers that will continue smoldering for hours. To deal with the embers, stir the coals and add more water. Then cover the coals with dirt or sand.

# HOW TO BUILD A FIRE

You will need:

A hand full of tinder (paper or grass, easy to light)

2 hands full of kindling (sticks as thick as your finger)

3 hands full of fuel (wood larger than kindling but smaller than blocks or branches).

Enough large blocks or branches ONLY for the time you need a large fire. Evening campfires only need 3-5 100mm thick x 1000mm branches or equivalent.

Now you must build your fire BEFORE you light it!

1. Clear the area around the fireplace 3 meters out.
2. Place the tinder in the middle of the fireplace
3. Stack your kindling in an open pyramid or 'tepee' shape that will allow air in and flames out. The tinder should be near the edge or leave a small cave in the stack to reach it for lighting.  
3a. You can also lay the kindling around the tinder in a log cabin or paddle pop stick type box layout.
4. Now stack your fuel in a larger pyramid or box shape close to the kindling but with enough space for the fire to Breathe!
5. Light and slowly add larger fuel as required. Coals are best for marshmallows. Large flames will burn them (fingers too).

