

Emergency Fire Procedures

Thankfully, serious fires on Scout camps are relatively rare. However, fire is a potentially dangerous thing, intentional or otherwise, and this page is designed to give suggestions on how to prevent such accidents happen.

Cooking

Open wood fires are actively encouraged wherever possible, and as long as people do not mess about there is no real danger. However, there are a few things that should be borne in mind when using an open fire:

Lighting If the fire does not seem to be catching, **NEVER** be tempted to throw some flammable liquid on to try and get it to light. It will break up into little drops (try throwing a cup of water to see what I mean), and the smaller drops will ignite easily. This can easily turn into a fireball with serious consequences.

Playing With Fire Whilst waiting for the fire to burn up efficiently, Scouts often want to poke the fire with sticks, then when the end catches wave it around like a sparkler. Apart from the fact that poking doesn't help it start, there is a danger of burning people by hitting them with a stick, and also burning clothes.

Grass Although there should be no risk if you have dug your fire pit big enough, grass around the edge of the fire pit can catch fire, and if the ground is dry it can quickly spread. You should always have a bucket of water, and a beater if possible, next to each fire. This is one of the reasons why a fire should never be left unattended. If you are getting the fire ready for a meal whilst a game is in progress, unless there is a volunteer to sit out and 'mind' the fire, take turns (10 minutes rotation) for fire watchers.

Afterwards When you have finished with a fire, such as last thing at night, make sure that the fire is fully out before going to bed. Give it a good poke and rake the ashes, but if need be throw some water on it.

Tents

In theory, tents should never catch fire. However, accidents or stupidity can cause this. There are several points to be aware of:

Site Planning Make sure that all fire pits are well away from all tents. This may sound obvious but it is surprising how often it is forgotten!

Smoking A cigarette is sufficient to ignite a tent - especially if you have just sprayed deodorant inside a tent! Scouts, of course, should not be smoking anyway, but Ventures

and Leaders could smoke on camp. If you really must smoke on camp, then it is better to leave your site to do it rather than 'hide' inside a tent.

Cooking Regardless of the weather, you should never be tempted to cook on a small gas cooker inside a tent. If the door flap blows into the flame, the tent could catch fire, and you could get trapped inside. Rather, set up a 'fire shelter' type tent outside, and put the cooker on a table underneath it. Proprietary fire shelters can be bought, but in their absence it is possible to tie an old flysheet between trees (make sure it is a good distance above ground).

When tents do catch fire, they do ignite very quickly. Below are some photos of a typical nylon hike tent and canvas patrol tent which have been purposely set on fire - within 2 minutes of ignition there is nothing left, and anyone trapped inside will almost certainly have been very seriously burnt or killed.



Photos courtesy of *Scouting Magazine*

Gas Appliances

Cooking on gas and reasons not to cook inside a tent have already been covered. However, similar safety procedures cover gas lamps. You should never have a gas lamp inside a small tent, although it is permissible to have a large gas lamp on a table inside a dining tent.

NEVER change a gas bottle inside a tent - any gas that leaks whilst changing the bottle will linger, and possibly ignite from a nearby source of ignition. Also be aware of any naked flames nearby - this may be sufficient to ignite gas escaping from a bottle as you change it, and possibly cause the bottle to explode with disastrous consequences.

Heath Fires

From time to time, large forest fires start, and there is no way to do anything about it except get away from it as fast as you can. If you are camping in a 'farmers field' type campsite, make sure you know of at least two escape routes by road in all directions. If a large forest fire is heading your way, never stop to 'strike' your site - if there is time gather up personal kit and get away as soon as possible. If, however, you are staying at a permanent site, the Warden will have an evacuation procedure ready to be implemented as soon as he is aware. Make sure you are aware of this procedure when you arrive at the site - it is very likely that you will not need to use it, but it is best to be prepared!