



Campfire safety

'Building a campfire to roast up some snags can be a real camping pleasure'

The fragile nature of our national parks means all fires are banned within park boundaries. This law is more relaxed for camping in our state forests and nature reserves, but restrictions do apply depending on their location. You will need to find out what the rules are for the area that you are going to make a fire in. Often if a designated camping area is outside the park - adjacent to the park entrance, for example - then fires will generally be permitted within established fireplaces. Regardless of where you are, a total fire ban means no fires can be lit under any circumstances.

If you are able to light a campfire, here's some sensible precautions to follow:

Where to build

- Any new fireplace must be built 4.5 m away from logs or stumps and 1.5 m away from vegetation
- Pick a spot around 3 m downwind so the prevailing breeze will blow the smoke away from your tent. This distance will also help prevent your tent, gas bottles and supplies from overheating
- Build your fire on a bed of sand or dirt about 2 m in diameter. Tidy away loose material that's lying around which could catch fire. If conditions are dry, create an enclosure out of small rocks - but only if they can be collected nearby without disturbing the environment unnecessarily

What to use

- Avoid using river stones or rocks from a waterway as their moisture content may cause them to explode if they are subject to extreme heat
- Start your fire by lighting the tinder using waterproof matches. Only use fire starters sparingly (one or two maximum) and never use liquid fuel
- Never dispose of material other than paper in the fire. Plastics can give off noxious fumes and aerosols and sealed containers can explode causing serious burns

Putting it out

- Put your fire out each night by dousing it with water. Don't just cover it as safety tests have proved that a campfire covered with sand or dirt can retain over 100 degrees of heat as much as 8 hours later. Contact with any material heated to over 70 degrees will cause a 3rd degree or full thickness burn. Many kids burnt by campfires were burnt the next morning, not realising the danger.

Fuel stoves

When circumstances prevent open fires, fuel stoves become the camper's sole choice for cooking. Portable fuel stoves use either refillable LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) cylinders or butane/propane mix disposable cartridges and come in one-burner, two-burner or three-burner varieties. LPG stoves with multi-burners are generally the most practical for families as they can handle a greater workload.

- Before leaving for a trip, inspect for signs of corrosion or damage to the cylinder valve before filling.
- If the cylinder is more than 10 years old, it cannot be refilled unless it has been inspected and approved by an authorized testing station.
- Double check all connections are sealed before attempting to light your stove, and never put your match near the connection points as a means of checking for leaks.
- Never use your stove inside your tent as poisonous carbon monoxide fumes build up very quickly in confined spaces.