



101 Critical Days of Summer

Safety Tip #10 - Camping Safety



When the demands of everyday life increase, camping can be a refreshing getaway. The simpler pace of 'roughing it' does not come without a price though. Adequate preparation will prevent your trip from becoming more stressful than you bargained.

Preparation can mean the difference between an enjoyable camping trip and a disaster. Before you pack a thing, research the terrain in which you'll stay and choose gear to meet the demands of the environment.

If you decide to visit one of the national forests, just remember they are a refuge for wild animals, including dangerous animals like bears and venomous snakes. Wild animals can be upset by human presence and can unexpectedly become aggressive. Do not give them a reason or an opportunity to attack. Always keep your distance. **Your safety is your responsibility.**

The most effective way to prevent mishaps is to adequately prepare for the trip. Knowledge of the area, weather, terrain, your limitations, plus a little common sense can help ensure a safe trip.

At the Campsite:

- **Plan your trip** so that you arrive at your actual campsite with enough daylight left to check over the entire campsite and to set-up camp.
- **To protect against sudden temperature and weather changes**, wear multi-layered clothing. Layers of clothing such as tank tops, long-sleeved shirts, and sweaters will allow you or your child to reduce or increase clothing as needed. To protect against rain and wind, bring breathable, lightweight waterproof jackets and pants. Children should wear brightly colored clothes to increase visibility. Caps or hats are also a good idea to guard against the sun and protect children's heads from insects.
- When hiking, tuck pant cuffs into socks and boots to protect against ticks.
- **Be sure to check the site thoroughly** for glass, sharp objects, branches that could fall or are hung low.
- **Check the contour of the land and look for potential trouble due to rain.** Check for areas that could flood or become extremely muddy and cause problems.
- **Check for potential hazards** at the campsite such as: poison ivy, bees, ants, sharp objects and other dangerous areas.
- **Please don't camp near the edge of cliffs.** They are very dangerous and you could easily fall after dark.
- **Fire is of prime concern at the campsite.** Be sure you have an area for a fire that cannot spread laterally or vertically. When ever a fire is lit at the campsite be sure that someone is assigned to watch it at all times. Keep water nearby for emergencies. Be sure that when you put the fire out you use water and soil and be certain that the fire is completely out, cool to the touch. Embers buried within the pile of ashes could reignite later.
- **Be very careful with gas canisters.** Keep upright at all times. Keep outside in well ventilated area. Check for leakage by putting soap liquid on all connections. Turn off when not in use. Never install or remove propane cylinders while stove is lit, near flames, pilot lights, other ignition sources or while stove is hot to the touch.
- **Be careful not to spill fuel.** Use funnel to fill tank.
- **Do not operate stove or store fuel containers around another heat source** such as a campfire. Only operate the stove in open, well ventilated areas. Never use the stove in a tent or a confined area.
- **Keep your campsite fires to an absolute minimum at all times.**



- **Dispose of all trash properly** in the proper recycling bins if available.
- **Return the campsite to its original condition** for the next camper if you disturb it in any way.
- **Watch out for bugs.** Hornets, bees, wasps, and yellow jackets are a problem at many campsites. Avoid attracting stinging insects by wearing light-colored clothing and avoiding perfumes or colognes. Should such an insect approach, do not wave wildly and swat blindly - instead use a gentle pushing or brushing motion to deter them.
- **Beware when encountering wildlife.** To ward off bears, keep your campsite clean, and do not leave food, garbage, coolers, cooking equipment or utensils out in the open. Remember that bears are potentially dangerous and unpredictable - never feed or approach a bear. Use a flashlight at night - many animals feed at night and the use of a flashlight may warn them away.
- **Beware of poisonous plants.** Familiarize yourself with any dangerous plants that are common to the area. If you come into contact with a poisonous plant, immediately rinse the affected area with water and apply a soothing lotion such as calamine to the affected area.

Drinking the Water

Assume that all wilderness streams and creeks are potentially contaminated water sources due to domestic and wild animals. Giardia lamblia, a common parasitic contaminant, can cause nausea, bloating, gas stomach cramps, and explosive diarrhea. If you are unable to bring bottled water with you on your trip, iodine is an inexpensive and easy way to purify water (you can purchase iodine tablets that dissolve in the water). You can also use water filters. Boiling is acceptable, but takes a lot of time, energy, and resources, also appropriate boiling times are uncertain because boiling points vary according to elevation.

Getting Lost

Another problem is getting lost. Teach your children how to recognize landmarks at the campsite and on hikes. While hiking, encourage them to turn around and look at the trail to familiarize themselves with their surroundings. Teach children to remain where they are and stay calm if they are lost. Children should wear whistles (whistles can be heard farther away than the human voice) and know the universal help signal of three blows or loud sounds. Before your trip, take a course on map reading and finding directions. For wilderness trekking always carry a topographical map and compass.

Take a look at this site for more helpful tips on getting lost and then getting found:
<http://www.surviveoutdoors.com/reference/lostandfound.asp>



A couple more safety tips:

It's safest to hike or camp with at least one companion. If you'll be entering a remote area, your group should have a minimum of four people; this way, if one is hurt, another can stay with the victim while two go for help. If you'll be going into an area that is unfamiliar to you, take along someone who knows the area or at least speak with those who do before you set out.

Leave a copy of your itinerary with a responsible person. Include such details as the make, year, and license plate of your car, the equipment you're bringing, the weather you've anticipated and when you plan to return.

Following a trip, wash your gear and support vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species.

Here are a few sites to check out before you go:

- http://www.surviveoutdoors.com/reference/first_aid_kits.asp
- <http://www.lovetheoutdoors.com/camping/Safety.htm>
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/boone/safety/camp/campfires.shtml>

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