

# Camping Safety

## Why do you need to read this information?

Doctors and firefighters are concerned at the number of children burnt by campfires. On average, 40 children a year are treated by the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital Burns Unit for burns from outdoor fires.



## On arrival... and setting up your campsite

*Check with local authorities whether a permit is required to camp or have campfires/ barbecues.*

*Before setting up, check the area for any hazards*

- *previous campfires covered with sand or dirt*
- *rubbish left by others such as broken glass or cans.*

*Check the area for potential problems like local flooding, high winds, bushfire risk and creepy crawlies.*



Photo: Tamara Vallance © Queensland Government



© Queensland Government

## Campfire Considerations

*Make sure the campfire is a safe distance from tents and other camping equipment, especially flammable items such as gas cylinders and fuel cans.*



*Light your campfire in a cleared area, free of long grass, scrub and overhanging branches.*

*Put your campfire out with water.*

*Use a barbecue pit or build a surround out of large rocks where possible.*

*Never use any kind of flammable liquid on a fire – even when you are trying to get it started.*

*Campfires should never be left unattended, particularly not overnight.*

## 5 Campfire Rules

### Rule 1: Positioning

Campfires should be positioned in cleared areas, where there are no overhanging branches, minimal grass and scrub. Ensure the campfire is a safe distance from tents, and that any other camping equipment is stored well away from it - especially flammable items such as gas cylinders and fuel cans.

### Rule 2: Building

Where possible use a fireplace such as a barbecue pit or build a fire pit and surround it with large rocks. When selecting rocks, be aware that heated river or creek stones may shatter if cooled quickly. Ensure the fire stays a controllable size.

### Rule 3: Starting

Start your campfire using appropriate ignition source and firelighter, paper and small kindling. Never use any kind of flammable liquids (such as petrol) on a fire to get it started.

### Rule 4: Extinguishing

Put your campfire out with **water** when you have finished with it. Use the water from your washing up to put your campfire out.

### Rule 5: Monitoring

Never leave unattended. Any campfire left unattended for any period of time, particularly overnight, should be extinguished by using a bucket of water.



If you see or accidentally start a grass or bushfire report it – call 000 immediately!

## The Science: How do we know water is better than sand or dirt?

Firefighters and doctors lit three campfires and let them burn for three hours, by which time they were hotter than 500 degrees. They then put one out with water, one out with sand, and let one burn out.

8 hours later...

- The campfire that was **left to burn** itself out was still over 100 degrees. This is easily hot enough to cause severe burns. This campfire also spontaneously re-ignited the next morning.
- The campfire that was put out by being **covered with sand** was still nearly 100 degrees eight hours later. Easily hot enough to cause a serious burn. Most campfire burns are caused by contact with hot embers the morning after a fire.

Campfires that are covered with sand not only keep their heat for longer, but are also disguised – and can look like a sand-pit or sandcastle to small children. The “sand castle” at this point has a temperature in excess of 300 degrees less than 10 centimetres below its surface.



### Did you know...

As little as a litre of water can help to cool an average size campfire to safe temperatures.

- The campfire that was **put out by water** was cooled to less than 50 degrees after only 10 minutes, and to around 10 degrees after eight hours. These are safe temperatures and are unlikely to cause burns.

Save your washing up water to put your campfire out if you need to conserve your water supply. Care should be taken when pouring water on fires as the steam generated can also cause burns.

## What are the dangers?

### Injury

Less than one second of body-contact with a campfire that has a temperature of over 70 degrees will result in a significant burn. Children severely burnt on their hands and feet usually undergo months if not years of intensive therapy to reduce scarring and regain mobility in their limbs. Young children are often burned by campfires that have been allowed to burn out or covered with sand the night before. Children who rise early or who have just arrived at a campsite are most at risk.

### Did you know...

91% of burns caused by outdoor fires are as a result of contact with coals rather than flame.

### Bushfire

Grass and bushfires can burn out of control and be a serious threat to property and wildlife. When you put your campfire out with water you also reduce the risk of accidentally starting a grass or bushfire.

### Loss of Property

Fire could damage camping equipment and ruin your holiday. The cost of replacing your equipment can vary, but the inconvenience and time lost cannot be retrieved.



**Remember, campfires should be extinguished using a good amount of water. Not sand or dirt.**

## It can happen to you.

2 year old Camryn's family arrived on North Stradbroke Island to start their much anticipated camping holiday. After her family set up camp at a vacated area, Camryn and her Mum went to test the ocean temperature. On walking back, Mum stopped to talk to a friend and watch Camryn walk to her father a mere 20m away when she heard her screaming and saw her stopped and then fall and put her hands down. While they ran to her, they tried to figure out what had happened – there was no obvious danger. When they got to her, they immediately felt the heat radiating from the ground and saw Camryn's feet were white and blistered. They immediately ran Camryn to the ocean and placed a terrified child into the water whilst also calling for an ambulance. Once the ambulance arrived to the meeting point near the beach, they were transported to the nearest doctors surgery where Camryn's hands and feet were put into cold running water for 20 minutes before being transferred to the Royal Children's Hospital Burns Unit where she has endured many surgeries and skin grafts since.



### First aid for burns

Stop the burning process.

- Stop, drop and roll if clothes are on fire.
- Smother the flames with water or a coat/blanket made of natural fibres.

Call Triple Zero (000).

- Stay on the phone with the emergency operator until they hang up.

Cool the burnt area as soon as possible.

- Apply cool running water to the affected area for at least 20 minutes.



## Campfire Essentials

### On Arrival

- Check the area for previous fire sites (i.e. hot sand).
- Check for rubbish, especially broken glass.

### Set-up

- Set campfire in cleared area away from long grass and overhanging branches.
- Ensure campfire is a safe distance from tents and other camping equipment.
- Use existing barbecue pit or surround fire with large dry rocks.

### Breaking camp

- Water! Don't start a fire if you can't put it out with sufficient water.
- Leave stones in place marking where the fire was so others will use the same place. This way, fire pits are easy to spot.