CAMPFIRE AND CAMPING SAFETY

It is important to ensure good campfire safety practices to protect yourself and your fellow campers from injury. People who are severely burnt on their hands and feet can undergo months or even years of intensive therapy to regain mobility in their limbs.

Before you light a fire

» Check for current fire bans. Visit the Rural Fire Service website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au or call the Free Call Fire Ban line on 1800 020 440 to check if there are fire bans in the area.

» Check with local authorities whether a permit is required to camp or have campfires or barbecues, or if there are any local restrictions which prohibit the lighting of fire, the positioning of the fire, and if it must be contained within a brazier, fire pit or similar device.

Positioning

» Campfires should be positioned in cleared areas, where there are no overhanging branches and minimal grass and scrub.

» Make sure 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 bottles and fuel cans.

Building

» Where possible use a fireplace such as a barbecue pit or existing fire pit.

» If there is no existing fire pit, build one surrounded with large rocks to prevent the escape of fire or burning materials. When selecting rocks, be aware that heated river or creek stones may shatter if cooled quickly.

» You should only burn seasoned dry firewood, untreated timbers or commercial hot coals.

» Make sure that you have enough water nearby to put out the fire before you light up.

Starting

» Start your campfire using an appropriate ignition source such as matches, paper and small kindling.

» Never use any kind of flammable liquids (such as petrol) on a fire to get it started.

» Keep smoke to a minimum.

Monitoring

» Ensure the fire stays a controllable size.

» Never leave the fire unattended, particularly not overnight.

» Do not leave children unsupervised near a campfire.

Extinguishing

» Put your campfire out with water when you have finished with it.

» Leave the stones in place to mark the fire location to encourage others to use the same place and ensure fire pits are easy to spot.

» Be careful when pouring water on the fire as the steam generated can also cause burns.

Did you know... As little as a litre of water can help to cool an average size campfire to a safe temperature.

How do we know water is better than sand or dirt?

Firefighters 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, easily hot enough to cause a severe burn. The 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.

» 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 at this point may have a temperature in excess of 300 degrees at less than 10 centimetres below the surface.

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.

Queensland Government

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.

Bushfire

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

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.

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

Safety first

In case of gas cylinder fire

 » Call 000.
 » Keep bystanders away.
 » Turn off cylinder valve if it is safe to do so.

First Aid for burns

Stop the burning process.

 » If clothing is on fire, stop, drop and roll to put out the flame.
 » Put out the flames with water or smother with a coat or blanket made of natural fibres, such as cotton or wool.

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 or until emergency services personnel arrive.

It can happen to you

Two year old Camryn's family arrived on North Stradbroke Island to start their much anticipated camping holiday. After the 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 her child walk to her father a mere 20 metres away. She heard screaming and saw her child stop, 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 the terrified child into the water whilst calling for an ambulance.

Once the ambulance arrived at the nearby meeting point, they were transported to the nearest doctors surgery where Camryn's hands and feet we're put into cold running water for 20 minutes before being transferred to the Royal Children's Hospital Burns Unit where Camryn has since undergone many surgeries and skin grafts.

If you see or accidentally start a grass or bushfire report it.

Call Triple Zero (000) immediately!