



city of
bristol

News Release

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Practice campfire safety this summer **proper campfire protocol can help avoid tragic consequences**

Bristol Fire Rescue and the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office understand that summertime weather signals the start of outdoor recreation and travel, including camping trips. While camping can create many wonderful memories, it can also result in devastating wildfires or serious burn injuries if fire-safe practices are not used.

Injuries from stepping or falling on burning coals pose a threat to children and adults alike. Hot coals just below the surface of soil or sand can retain intense heat for up to 24 hours, severely burning anyone who walks or falls on them. These coals are especially dangerous for small children who have thinner and more easily damaged skin than adults. However, these types of painful injuries can be prevented. Here are some campfire safety tips:

Before leaving home:

- Check with authorities at your camping location for outdoor burning restrictions. During especially dry seasons even recreational and cooking fires can be restricted. Make sure there isn't a burn ban in effect.
- Check the weather forecast. Be aware of any unsafe weather conditions, such as high winds.
- Talk to your group about the importance of fire safety. Make sure everyone knows to stop, drop, cover their face and roll should their clothes catch on fire.
- Set family boundaries. Only designated adults should light the campfire, add wood or put out the fire. Never let children use matches or light a fire.

Preparing and managing your campsite:

- If possible, use an existing fire pit or fire ring at the campsite. If there is not an existing fire pit, and pits are allowed, look for a site that is at least 15 feet away from tent walls, shrubs, trees, or other flammable objects. Avoid areas with overhanging branches, steep slopes or dry grasses. Clear the area of all debris, down to bare soil.
- Construct a fire ring from rocks and keep the ring under four feet in diameter with a ten foot clearance around the perimeter.
- Fill the pit with small pieces of dry wood; never rip or cut branches from living trees.
- Stack any extra wood upwind away from the fire.
- Have a bucket of water and shovel nearby to put out the fire. Never leave a fire unattended.
- Do not use flammable liquids to start a campfire.
- Never use matches or lighters inside tents. Do not burn charcoal or use portable camping heaters, lanterns or stoves inside tents, campers, or vehicles.
- Never burn aerosol cans, pressurized containers, glass, or aluminum cans.
- Set and enforce a safety zone around the campfire where all can sit and relax around the fire. Stress to children the importance of staying inside the safety zone. Always supervise children when a campfire or hot coals are burning.

Putting the fire out:

- Allow the wood to burn completely to ash, if possible.
- Pour lots of water on the fire; drown all embers, not just the red ones. Pour until hissing sound stops.
- Stir the campfire ashes and embers with a shovel.
- Scrape the sticks and logs to remove any embers.
- Stir and make sure everything is wet and cold to the touch.
- If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough dirt or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cool. REMEMBER: **Do Not** bury the fire, as the fire will continue to smolder and could catch roots on fire that will eventually get to the surface and start a wildfire. If it is too hot to touch, it is too hot to leave.

Bristol Fire Rescue proudly partners with the United States Fire Administration's fire prevention initiative, "Fire Is Everyone's Fight," and promotes fire safety through a number of programs year round. For more tips on Campfire Safety contact Assistant Chief Jack Spurgeon at (423) 989-5701.