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**Practice Campfire Safety**

Finally! Spring has sprung and it’s time to enjoy the great outdoors once again. Camping under the stars with friends and family gathered around a warm and inviting campfire is a popular activity during the warmer months. It is also one that comes with certain responsibilities to ensure the safety of campers and the environment. There is more to building and maintaining a safe campfire than you may have thought. A few simple steps could be the difference between a wonderful experience and a dangerous situation.

When picking the spot to build your campfire, it is important to take several things into consideration.

* Know the rules! Certain campgrounds and parks prohibit campfires. Sometimes, the digging of a fire pit is also not allowed. Be sure to check all rules and regulations before you begin.
* Be aware of weather conditions. Never build a fire in extremely dry conditions.
* Keep your campfire at least 15 feet away from your living area. Be aware of vegetation, trees and other flammable objects when choosing your spot. Clear the area of dead leaves and brush.
* Check the wind! Make sure your campfire is protected from wind gusts that may blow the fire toward trees or your campsite.

Once the proper spot for your campfire is determined and you are sure you are adhering to the rules, it’s time to prepare! Your fire pit should be about a foot deep and encircled with rocks. Before you assemble the materials for the fire, be sure to have something close at hand to put it out! Make sure you have a water source, a bucket and a shovel nearby. When you are ready to gather wood, make sure you only use what you find on the ground. Never cut whole trees or branches. Even if the tree is dead, it may be home to birds and other wildlife in the forest. Small twigs, dry leaves, dead grass and needles on the forest floor may be used for tinder. Sticks smaller than 1 inch around are great for kindling. The larger pieces of wood that you will use for fuel should be stacked upwind, away from the fire. Be sure to keep the fire to a manageable size. Do not feed it until it is difficult to control! Keep children and pets away from the fire. Most importantly, never leave a campfire unattended!

When it’s time to extinguish your campfire, the best scenario is to let the fire burn completely to ash. Pour water on the fire, a lot of water! Make sure all embers are thoroughly soaked. Water should be poured on the fire until you are no longer able to hear any hissing sounds. If, for some reason, water is not available, use a shovel to bury the fire with sand or dirt. Put enough on the fire so there are no embers exposed and still smoldering. Don’t stop until you are sure the fire is totally out. Stir the fire with a shovel until all material is cool.

Most importantly, remember this tip from Smokey the Bear, *“If it’s too hot to touch, it’s too hot to leave!”* More great tips from Smokey on campfire safety are available at http://bit.ly/campfiresafety18.

**Insert your Department name** relies on brave men and women to volunteer their time to serve as volunteer firefighters to ensure that every call for help is answered. Men and women with almost every skill set are needed. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact **Insert your Department name at Insert website** or call **Insert your Dept. phone number**.

There are volunteer opportunities at your local volunteer fire department for citizens willing to work hard. To learn more about becoming a volunteer firefighter and joining your local volunteer fire department, please visit [www.VolunteerFireTN.org](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org).

***About the Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. (TFCA)****The TFCA provides leadership to career and volunteer Fire Chiefs, Chief Fire Officers and managers of emergency service organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The TN Fire Chiefs Association (TFCA) also encourages the professional advancement of the fire service to ensure and maintain greater protection of life and property from fire and natural or man-made disasters. The TFCA’s mission is to provide leadership to career and volunteer chiefs, chief fire officers, and managers of Emergency Service Organizations throughout the State of Tennessee through vision, information, education, service and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities. More information about the TFCA is located at* [*www.tnfirechiefs.com*](http://www.tnfirechiefs.com) *.*

***About Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS)****The Tennessee Fire Chiefs Association was awarded a SAFER recruitment and retention grant in 2016 and partnered with the International Association of Fire Chiefs to identify recruitment and retention goals, strategies and marketing methodologies that would benefit not only participating departments, but all fire departments in the state. 19 departmental groups, consisting of 64 departments, were selected to participate in Phase I of the program. The VWS program is also operating in Virginia through the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and Connecticut through the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association. There is also currently a National VWS effort focusing on diversity and new trainings. More information about the Tennessee VWS can be found at* [*www.VolunteerFireTN.org*](http://www.VolunteerFireTN.org)*.*

*(Insert info about your department in similar format to above)*