

Camping Fire Safety

Even a small campfire has the potential to spread and become a frightening and unmanageable wildfire. Fuel stoves, heaters, or lanterns in confined spaces can cause carbon monoxide poisoning or explosions when fuel leaks occur. Tents are often destroyed by fire within minutes of an incident.

Fire Facts

- Every year, some Albertans suffer serious injury or death from burns while camping.
- According to a study of burn patients admitted to the University of Alberta's Firefighter's Burn Treatment Centre, in northern Alberta alone, 74 per cent of all camping injuries to children were due to burns. These numbers are even higher in adults. The two major causes of burns were children walking or falling on open flames (34 per cent) and combustibles being added to open flame (30 per cent).

The Law

Appliances

- The Alberta Building Code requires that the products of combustion from oil, gas, and solid fuel burning appliances be vented in conformance with the requirements in the applicable installation standards.

Campfires

- Forest and Prairie protection Act requires a person who desires to light or maintain an outdoor campfire, in a forest protection area, for cooking or warming purposes during a fire season shall
 - set the fire on a flat rock, gravel bar, sand or bare mineral soil at a spot relatively clear of vegetation and located near water;
 - clear the site of all debris down to mineral soil of at least 1 metre from the edge of the fire;
 - keep the fire in control and attended to at all times, and
 - extinguish the fire before leaving the site.
- Your municipality may by bylaw also require a burning permit or place restrictions on campfires, even outside of the prescribed fire season. Always check with your local Fire Chief before burning. Permits can normally be obtained from the following:
 - Your local fire chief,
 - Municipal authorities,
 - Sustainable Resource Development prevention officers.
- The Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act prohibits the burning of certain items such as household refuse, plastics and rubber products. Check with your local Fire Chief for these prohibitions where you intend to burn anything other than clean, dry firewood or charcoal.

Flammables

For more information, please contact the Alberta Emergency Management Agency at (780) 422-9000 (dial 310-000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca
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- As per the propane Storage and Handling Code, no propane cylinders may be stored or used inside any structure unless specified in the code, and shall not be stored or installed under any fire escape, stairway, or ramp used as a means of egress from a building. An outdoor storage area must be at least 3 feet from any building and its opening or a mechanical air intake, and 10 feet from thoroughfares or sidewalks, and adjoining property occupied by schools, churches, hospitals, athletics fields, or other points of public gathering. A maximum of 3 TC Specification 39, 2P, and 2Q (single trip or non-refillable) cylinders may be stored in a dwelling unit.
- Part 4 of the Alberta Fire Code states Flammable liquids shall not be stored in or adjacent to exits, elevators, or principle routes that provide access to exits.
- Your container must be ULC or CSA approved.

Safety Tips

Campfires

- When selecting a campfire site, attempt to find pre-existing fire facilities, such as fire pits or stoves. Where these facilities are not available, select a site that is clean and away from dry grass, heavy bush, leaves, logs, peat areas, or overhanging branches.
- Keep a ready supply of water near your site in case of an emergency.
- Prepare your site by digging a pit, downwind from your tent, and surround it with rocks to prevent fire spread. Clear the area around your campfire of all debris for at least one metre.
- Build your fire gradually, and keep it small for cooking or warmth purposes only. Never use gasoline or liquid fire starters as an explosion can result, and avoid using paper as it can ignite and blow off the fire into the forest. Attend your fire at all times, and be sure it does not spread out of the pit or that sparks are blown away from the fire.
- Stop adding wood to the fire well before you want to extinguish it and allow the fire to burn down. Spread the remains evenly in the fire pit, and slowly stir in water until the ashes are cool. Test the campfire for heat before leaving the site.
- NEVER leave children unattended or playing near a campfire.
- Look for signs that warn of potential fire hazards in provincial and national forests and campgrounds, and always obey park service regulations.

Appliances and Equipment

- Ensure that oil, gas, and solid fuel burning appliances in your RV, tent, camper or any enclosed space used for a residential occupancy are effectively vented to the outdoors to remove the products of combustion from the building or enclosure. Carbon monoxide exposures and deaths have occurred as a result of the inappropriate use of un-vented gas appliances.
- Only use appliances and equipment for their intended purposes.
- Use battery-operated camping equipment whenever possible.
- Ensure liquid-fuelled appliances and fuel containers are certified and labelled by a recognized agency, such as Canadian standards association (CSA) or Underwriter's Laboratories (ULC).

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- Follow manufacturer's instructions for connecting and operating your appliance. This will reduce the occurrence of leaks.
- Always refuel camping appliances outside.
- Always store flammable liquids and gases outside.
- When using appliances fuelled with flammable liquids and gases, keep them away from combustibles, such as tent walls, blankets, paper towels and plates.
- Ensure the flame on appliances is clear blue with occasional yellow tips. A mostly yellow flame is a warning sign of incomplete combustion and possible carbon monoxide presence.
- Have flammable gas and liquid appliances inspected annually. Insects or rodents may damage the appliance when it is not in use.
- Check and maintain all fuel connections and fume vents. Check for leaks by brushing connections with soapy water and looking for bubbles. Have gas appliances checked and serviced at least once a year by a qualified technician.
- Transport flammable fuels in a secured, upright, well-ventilated area.
- When travelling, shut down the fuel to all appliances and equipment by closing the fuel supply.

Tents

- Use tents manufactured of flame resistant fabrics.
- Set your tent up at a safe distance upwind from the campfire.
- Never use matches, candles or open flames in your tent.
- Extinguish your campfire before you go to bed.
- Try to buy a tent with two exits and prepare an escape plan. Be ready to cut your way out of the tent if a fire occurs.
- Keep an extinguisher or container of water available at all times, especially inside the tent at night.

Camping trailers and recreational vehicles

- Ensure flammable fuel appliances in your type of vehicle are approved and certified for use by a recognized testing agency.
- Propane cylinders should be mounted on the roof of the vehicle.
- When filling propane or gas cylinders mounted to a vehicle, turn off the ignition, have all passengers leave the vehicle, and ensure valves are closed after filling.
- Do not cook while the vehicle is in motion.
- Locate your trailer or vehicle at a safe distance upwind from the campfire.
- Extinguish smoking materials before going to bed. Place the ashes in a metal container and soak them with water.
- Avoid accumulating and storing combustibles such as newspapers and grocery bags in your vehicle.
- Develop a fire escape plan and keep a small axe handy for emergency escapes.

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- Keep a fire extinguisher handy when cooking, and keep one by the trailer exit door at all times.
- Consider installing a carbon monoxide detector in your vehicle.

Boating

- Before fuelling your boat, extinguish smoking materials and shut off all motors, fans and heating devices.
- Be sure the fuelling nozzle is grounded to the fuel intake and don't fill the tank to capacity – leave room for expansion.
- Wipe up fuel spills immediately and check the bilge for fuel leakage and odour.
- After fuelling and before starting the motor, ventilate with the blower for at least four minutes.
- Only use portable stoves and heaters specifically designed for marine use.
- Keep the bilge free of rags and other combustibles.
- Install a smoke alarm inside your covered boat and test the battery before using the boat each time. Replace the battery at least once a year.
- Have a fire extinguisher on board your vessel.

Vacations

Before you leave the house:

- Turn off or disconnect all electrical appliances.
- Unplug all televisions and radios as lightning or electrical surges can cause fire in this equipment.

When you return home:

- Check to make sure smoke alarms are still functioning by testing them.