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CAMPFIRE SAFETY

Clover Safe notes are intended primarily for 4-H volunteers and members nine years and older.



*Photograph Courtesy of San Joaquin
County 4-H Program*

One tradition of camping is to have a campfire in the evening. Although having a campfire would seem to be a relatively straightforward affair, there are several precautions that must be taken to assure campers do not get burned or the campfire does not inadvertently become uncontrolled and result in an unintentional wildfire.

This Clover Safe note provides information about how to have a safe campfire.

Campfire Safety

- Prior to starting a campfire, learn whether any outdoor burning restrictions are in place. Always follow any outdoor burning restrictions and government regulations.
- A first aid kit, emergency telephone numbers (911), directions to the closest emergency care facility, and cell or land-line phone should be readily available before the campfire activity starts.
- Water should be available at all times to extinguish the fire quickly if necessary.
- Never locate a campfire under hanging branches or in areas of heavy brush or tall grasses.
- Use a fire ring that either is built from stones or composed of a metal ring. The fire ring should be less than four feet in diameter.
- Assure that an area extending to about 10 feet outside the perimeter of the fire ring is clear of debris down to the soil. Campers should be seated or located outside the cleared area.
- Keep a bucket of water and shovel nearby to put out embers that may escape the fire ring or to put the campfire completely out when the activity is finished.
- Never start a campfire with a flammable fuel. Use paper scraps or small kindling to start a campfire.
- Do not start a campfire during a thunderstorm or during periods of high winds, such as Santa Ana winds.
- Never throw away a burned match until the match head is cold to the touch.
- Campers should be aware that once a stick, piece of kindling, branch, or log enters the campfire, then it stays in the campfire.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. A responsible adult must be present at all times that a campfire is burning.
- Put the campfire out by drowning it with water. Stir the water and ashes until the ashes are cold to the touch.
- At a later time, double check the campfire ashes to assure that the fire has remained out.