

CAMPING SAFETY FACT SHEET

No television. No home-cooked meals. No warm bed to rest your head. For thousands of families, this scenario isn't another night of watching "Survivor". It's a retreat of their own in the great outdoors.

Being close to nature can be a time of exploration and adventure for the entire family, but taking some simple safety precautions can make your camping trip one to remember.

When camping, there are many hazards that families may not think about including the sun, bugs, poisonous plants and campfires. While the intent of a family camping trip may be for mom and dad to relax, and to let the kids have fun, parents need to pay close attention to their children's safety and whereabouts, since tragedy can happen in the blink of an eye.

The following guidelines will enable you to enjoy a safe, fun campout:

Safety Outdoors

- Keep first aid supplies and emergency telephone numbers accessible at all times.
- Know where the nearest telephone or ranger station is located and if possible, carry a cell phone.
- Dress children in several layers of clothing. The inner layer should be a breathable, synthetic material that pulls moisture from the skin.
- Remember, a child's body temperature changes faster than adults.
- Check the weather forecast before you leave.
- Pack essentials, such as flashlights, extra food, water, and rain gear in case of bad weather.
- Make sure sleeping bags are clean, warm and dry.
- Inform others where you are camping and when you'll return.
- Teach kids these skills and how to be safe and responsible in the outdoors.

Hiking Safely

- Never allow children to hike alone. Teach children to always hike with an adult.
- Map out your hiking trail ahead of time. Be sure any trail you choose is well marked and do not stray from it.
- Learn to use a compass.
- Make sure children are physically capable of the hike in terms of distance, pace and difficulty.
- Make sure to bring plenty of drinking water. Hiking can cause dehydration.
- Bring high-energy snacks.
- Bring extra layers of clothing and rain gear in case the weather suddenly changes.
- Wear proper hiking boots and clothing that covers as much exposed skin as possible to protect from scrapes, bites and poisonous plants.
- Tell others where you're hiking and when you'll return.
- Keep first aid supplies accessible at all times, even on short hikes.

Cooking and Heating

- Always supervise children near a campfire or portable stove. Teach them to stay away from campfires and stoves, even when not in use.
- When making a campfire pit, be sure it is large enough to keep a fire from spreading. Avoid building fires on windy days.
- Always check the fire danger levels posted at the entrances of wilderness parks and camping

areas. Each day, the park or forest ranger reports on the level of danger from fire. Do not build a fire if the park recommends against it.

- Keep a bucket of water and shovel near the fire at all times.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach. Never use matches or lighters inside tents.
- Never burn charcoal, or use portable camping heaters, lanterns or stoves inside tents, campers or vehicles.

Preventing Poisonings

- Teach children to stay away from all plants and wild berries unless you are certain they are safe. The safest recommendation is to stay away from plants that are not known to you.
- Teach children to stay clear of poison ivy and poison oak.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless and deadly gas. CO poisoning kills approximately 30 campers each year and injures another 450 people.
- Be aware of potential sources of carbon monoxide poisoning. They include commonly used camping equipment such as portable camping heaters, lanterns, and vehicles.

Bites and Stings

- Apply insect repellent to a child's clothing and exposed skin. Some repellents are too strong for small children, so consult medical personnel. Always have an adult apply the insect repellent and always follow the product's instructions.
- Avoid using scented products such as perfumes and shampoos that attract insects.
- Be sure to shake out all clothing before wearing it.
- Teach children not to disturb or provoke any animals they may encounter. Although an animal may look friendly, sudden actions could frighten the animal and provoke an attack.
- Never leave a child alone with an animal, even if you believe the animal is harmless.
- Teach children to watch out for snakes and never to touch or disturb them.
- Check clothing and exposed skin for ticks and other insects after spending time outdoors.

Sun Safety

- Apply sunscreen (SPF 15 or greater) 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun so it can penetrate. Apply frequently throughout the day, even in cloudy conditions.
- Dress your child in light-colored fabrics that cover exposed skin such as the head, arms and legs.
- Encourage children to drink water frequently to avoid overheating and/or dehydration.
- Be especially careful in high altitudes where the sun's rays are stronger.