

Courtesy *Safety Times*

According to A. C. Nielsen estimates, about 64.5 million Americans go camping, and sometimes it seems they're all cramped into your campground. Regardless of the form or duration, camping gets us away from our living rooms and into a close communication with nature.

Like any worthwhile endeavor, camping is only as good as the preparation and planning that goes into it. Here are some tips to make your visit with Mother Nature more friendly.

What to Take

Never leave home without a well-stocked first aid kit and proper, comfortable clothing. Take time to thoroughly consider the things you will need, including cooking utensils, insect repellents, lanterns, tool kit, sunscreen, matches in a waterproof container, toilet paper, soap, hooded sweat-shirts for children, a hat, and a compass.

In a Trailer or RV

- ◆ Don't endanger your family's lives by overpacking, which will affect your vehicle's handling.
- ◆ Drive only on roads which your vehicle is designed to travel, and use only marked RV campsites.
- ◆ Arrive before sundown to select a suitable camp site.
- ◆ Beware of trees with dead branches and low areas that could flood or become muddy in heavy rain.
- ◆ Inspect the area for poison plants, bees' nests, and other dangers.
- ◆ Clear away any rocks, roots, or debris that might present hazards.
- ◆ Use only electrically operated lights in a trailer or RV.

"Atenting" to Safety

- ◆ Read the labels before buying a tent. Only buy a tent that is flame resistant.
- ◆ Pitch your tent at least 15 feet upwind from grills and fireplaces.
- ◆ Use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns inside a tent.

Fire: Friend and Foe

- ◆ Check and maintain gas connections and fume vents. Turn off an RV's LP-gas tank before traveling. Do not use LP-fueled appliances while in motion.
- ◆ Store flammable liquids only in safety cans a safe distance from your tent, camper, or any source of heat or open flame.
- ◆ Use a funnel to pour flammable liquids. Wipe up spills.
- ◆ Fill lanterns and stoves a safe distance downwind from heat sources.
- ◆ Keep a fire extinguisher or pail of water available at all times.

Roughing It



- ◆ Do not use a flammable or combustible liquid to start a fire.
- ◆ Develop a fire escape plan with your family. Get out first.

Campfires and Grills

- ◆ Build a campfire where it cannot spread. Never leave a burning fire unattended. Put it out with water and soil.
- ◆ Leave at least a 3-foot area clear of leaves, dry grass, and pine needles around grills, fireplaces, and tents.
- ◆ Don't pour fire starter on a smoldering fire.
- ◆ Do not dump hot charcoal on the ground where someone can accidentally step on it.
- ◆ Do not put a grill in a car or RV unless it's cold and has been thoroughly cleaned of cinders.
- ◆ Supervise children at all times.
- ◆ Don't wear loose-fitting clothing around fire.
- ◆ Teach and practice the STOP, DROP, and ROLL method of putting out a clothing fire.

While Exploring

- ◆ Children should carry a loud whistle in case they are lost or injured.
- ◆ For long treks into the deep woods, wear long pants and hiking boots (instead of sneakers), with jeans tucked into boots or long socks. A long-sleeved shirt with the collar up is also a sound idea.
- ◆ Do not pet or feed wild animals, no matter how cute they may seem.
- ◆ To avoid beestings, do not wear bright-colored clothing, and do not use cologne or scented cosmetics, especially florals. Avoid rapid movements around bees.
- ◆ Learn to identify the three most common poisonous plants—poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. If you come in contact with one of them, quickly wash the affected area with soap and cool water. ■

