Skills Session: Fire Site Preparation and Building

Time Frame

1 hour

Materials

Every patrol should have one each of the following items:

- Site suitable for building a fire
- Camp shovel
- Fuelwood
- Matches
- Plumbers' candles (fire starters)
- Cotton gloves
- Water
- Rake (optional, for demonstration purposes)
- Canvas or plastic pieces to protect fuelwood

Resources

- Guide to Safe Scouting
- Firem'n Chit pocket certificate, No. 34236B
Goals

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Demonstrate the proper use, safety, maintenance, and care of backpacking stoves and fuel containers.
- List environmental and safety considerations in selecting a fire site and firewood, and the construction, use, and care of a campfire.
- Explain the function and rationale for using fires and whether a ground fire should be built or a backpacking stove should be used.
- Prepare and build a safe, functional, environmentally sound campfire.
- Explain the types and functions of common fire starting materials and demonstrate how to light a campfire.
- Explain how to start a fire during inclement weather.
- Demonstrate how to return the fire site to its natural state.

Assignments

- Discuss when it is appropriate to use a cooking fire and a lightweight stove. Discuss the safety procedures for using both. 🍗 $28
- Demonstrate how to light a fire and a lightweight stove. 🍗 $28

Before You Begin

Conduct this lesson after the Woods Tools skills session but before participants prepare their first cooked meal. Before starting, check and clear all fire-building regulations for the course area. Depending on the use of backpacking stoves, this session should also be supplemented during the Packing and Hiking Techniques skills session.

Recommend that staff members use the lecture and demonstration format, followed by hands-on practice for participants at a central location that has accessible fire sites.

Lesson Plan: Fire Site Preparation and Building

Campfire know-how requires attention to safety, environmental ethics, and other elements of responsibility. The Boy Scout Handbook provides greater detail about all aspects of fire site preparation and building.

Camp Stoves vs. Campfires

Many Scout units now use lightweight camp stoves on all their camping trips, especially with the shift toward low-impact camping and awareness of Leave No Trace principles. Every good Scout learns when it's more appropriate to use a lightweight stove than it is to build a cooking fire.
How to Build a Campfire

- **MAKE A SAFE FIRE SITE.** Make sure that nothing will burn except the fuel you feed the flames and that the fire cannot spread, and use existing fire sites whenever possible.

- **BARE-GROUND FIRE SITE.** Protect the ground from the heat by building an earthen pad 2 feet square and 3 inches thick on the bare ground.

- **GATHER TINDER, KINDLING, AND FUELWOOD.** Key ingredients for a successful fire:
  - Patience
  - Tinder (dry pine needles, grasses, shredded bark, fluff from seed pods)
  - Kindling (dead twigs no thicker than a pencil)
  - Fuelwood (which can be as thin as your finger or as thick as your wrist)

- **LAY THE FIRE.** Arrange the tinder, kindling, and fuelwood so that the heat of a single match can start your campfire.

- **FIREPLACES.** The fireplace holds your cook pots in place above the flames and allows air to keep your fire burning. See the *Boy Scout Handbook* for surefire wet-weather fire tips.

- **PUTTING OUT A CAMPFIRE.** Extinguish a fire cold out when it is no longer needed—cold enough so that you can run your hands through the ashes.

- **CLEANING A FIRE SITE.** When the fire site has cooled, pick out and pack out any bits of paper, foil, and unburned food left. Leave no trace.

How to Use Lightweight Stoves

Camp stoves make cooking fast and easy. There are many types to choose from, so remember to follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and exactly.

**PRACTICAL BENEFITS OF USING A CAMP STOVE**

- They are easy to light in most weather conditions and work well in deserts, at high altitudes, and in deep forests.
- They are clean and quick to heat water and food.
- The heat can easily be adjusted for the type of cooking required.
- Stoves make cleanup easier and faster.
- They leave no marks on the land.
- Lack of firewood won’t be a problem.
- Many areas do not permit campfires.
STOVE SAFETY RULES

Activity
At a central location, have participants build a fire in their patrol, cook a meal for the course, and dine together. Concentrate on properly gathering and preparing tinder, kindling, and fuel for a cooking fire.