

Whether you're roughing it in a tent or planning a family outing to a national forest, there are many ways to make sure your experience is fun and safe. Consider the following safety tips:

- **Pack a first aid kit.** Your kit can prove invaluable if you or a member of your group suffers a cut, bee sting or allergic reaction. Pack antiseptics for cuts and scrapes, tweezers, insect repellent, bug spray, a snake bite kit, pain relievers, and sunscreen.
- **Bring emergency supplies.** In addition to a first aid kit, this includes: a map, compass, flashlight, knife, waterproof fire starter, personal shelter, whistle, warm clothing, high energy food, water, and insect protection.
- **Learn the ABC's of treating emergencies.** Recognizing serious injuries will enable you to attend to a victim until medical help arrives.
- **Before you leave, find out the weather report.** When you arrive at the site, watch the skies for changes and carry a compact weather radio. In inclement weather, find shelter until the worse passes. Stay dry -- wet clothes contribute to heat loss. Also, keep sleeping bags and important gear, dry at all times.
- **Arrive early.** Plan your trip so that you arrive at your actual campsite with enough daylight to check over the entire site and to set-up camp.
- **Check for potential hazards.** Be sure to check the site thoroughly for glass, sharp objects, branches, large ant beds, poison ivy, bees, and hazardous terrain.
- **Avoid areas of natural hazards.** Check the contour of the land and look for potential trouble due to rain. Areas that could flood or become extremely muddy can pose a problem.
- **Inspect the site.** Look for a level site with enough room to spread out all your gear. Also, a site that has trees or shrubs on the side of prevailing winds will help block strong, unexpected gusts.
- **Build fires in a safe area.** Your open fires and fuel-burning appliances must be far enough away from the tent to prevent ignition from sparks, flames, and heat. Never use a flame or any other heating device inside a tent. Use a flashlight or battery-powered light instead.
- **Make sure your fires are always attended.** Be sure you have an area for a fire that cannot spread laterally or vertically -- a grill or stone surface is ideal. When putting the fire out, drown it with water, making sure all embers, coals and sticks are wet. Embers buried deep within the pile have a tendency to reignite later.
- **Pitch your tent in a safe spot.** Make sure your tent is made of a flame-retardant fabric, and set up far enough away from the campfire. Keep insects out of your tent by closing the entrance quickly when entering or leaving.
- **Dispose of trash properly.** Remember to recycle -- use the proper recycling bins if available. Be cautious when using a propane stove. Read the instructions that come with the stove and propane cylinder. Use the stove as a cooking appliance only -- never leave it

unattended while it's burning.

- **Watch out for bugs.** Hornets, bees, wasps, and yellow jackets are a problem at many campsites. Avoid attracting stinging insects by wearing light-colored clothing and avoiding perfumes or colognes. Should such an insect approach, do not wave wildly and swat blindly - instead use a gentle pushing or brushing motion to deter them.
- **Beware when encountering wildlife.** To ward off bears, keep your campsite clean, and do not leave food, garbage, coolers, cooking equipment or utensils out in the open. Remember that bears are potentially dangerous and unpredictable -- never feed or approach a bear. Use a flashlight at night -- many animals feed at night and the use of a flashlight may warn them away.
- **Beware of poisonous plants.** Familiarize yourself with any dangerous plants that are common to the area. If you come into contact with a poisonous plant, immediately rinse the affected area with water and apply a soothing lotion such as calamine to the affected area.
- **Practice good hygiene.** Make sure you wash your hands, particularly after using the toilet and before handling food, to prevent everyone in your group becoming ill.

Source: USDA Forest Service