

# Forest Fire Prevention Is You.



Stir coals and drown your campfire dead out.

## Make your campfire safe

There's nothing like a campfire. In fact, many people say a campfire is the best part of outdoor living.

But campfires are also one of the main causes of forest fires in Ontario. On average, 1,500 forest fires are started every year in Ontario. And eight out of 10 of these are started by persons carelessly using campfires, cigarettes or matches.

Even experienced campers and fishermen can accidentally set off a destructive wildfire. But this doesn't mean you should be afraid to build a fire to pan fry your next shore lunch, or to keep you warm at your campsite. It's possible to enjoy a campfire without risk by paying attention to weather conditions, and knowing and applying the fire safety rules.

The first question you should ask yourself is whether conditions are right for a campfire. There are times of the year when it doesn't make sense to take the risk, no matter how

careful you think you are. If it's hot, dry and windy there's a good chance that sparks from a fire will blow into the woods igniting the underbrush.

Another thing to ask yourself is whether a campfire is legal. When the forest fire danger is high, or a number of forest fires are already burning in the area, the Ministry of Natural Resources may declare a Restricted Fire Zone.

The restricted area will be marked by orange and green signs, and announcements will be made on the radio and in local newspapers. In a Restricted Fire Zone, campfires are not allowed for any reason.

When you've determined that conditions are ok to build a fire, the next step is choosing the site. If possible, pick a site that is close to water and keep a full container of water beside the fire at all times. If you are not near water, then make sure the campfire site is away from dry grass, trees

and shrubs.

Prepare your site carefully. Build on bare rock if you can. Otherwise, clear a two-metre area around the site by digging right down to the mineral soil. This will prevent the fire from igniting leaves, pine needles and peat on the forest floor. It will also eliminate the possibility of the fire spreading underground and popping up elsewhere.

Before starting the fire, make sure you have enough wood on hand. Many fires become wildfires when they're left unattended while someone looks for more wood. Start the fire with kindling, adding larger pieces as needed.

Many people believe they should ring their campfire with a circle of stones. But in fact, stones will not likely contain a fire and could actually protect or hide leftover embers allowing them to flare up later.

Another rule of thumb in building a safe fire is to keep it small.

## Wildlife implications

When forests burn, trees are destroyed. The damage caused by wildfires in Ontario's forests, however, extends far beyond the number of trees lost.

Fire causes social disruption when it endangers a community. Disruption of commercial transportation, highway, and rail and air service can be very expensive. Destruction of vast scenic vistas can wipe out a local tourism industry that depends on healthy, green forests, sparkling lakes and rivers, abundant wildlife and fishing. The disruption of wood supplies to local mills can be a severe economic blow to a community.

Sweeping wildfire can also cause large-scale erosion. Rainfall running over barren, scorched earth carries silt and ash into lakes and rivers, which may damage water quality and fish stocks.

Wildfires also kill young trees - the forests of tomorrow. And the fires can change a forest of valuable timber into a forest of inferior "weed" trees. Repeated fires can prevent a new forest from starting.

We all know that without trees, we wouldn't have the paper and wood products we use and depend on every day in the home and work place - products that range from facial tissues to furniture to newspapers.

In addition to the commercial, recreational and ecological impacts, forest fires also result in major firefighting expenditures every year. Ontario is now committing close to \$35-million annually to forest fire control.



A wildfire a raging inferno

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## Local school poem contest

Primary school children across Ontario are being encouraged to participate in a poster and poem contest dealing with the subject of forest fire prevention.

Forest Fire Prevention is You is the theme of the contest, which is being promoted through schools and boards of education. Children are being asked to design a poster and write a short accompanying poem. The posters are expected to deal primarily with the careless use of fire.

Judging will be carried out in four categories, grades 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8, based on artistic ability, originality and design, and poetic message. Entries will first be judged at the district level, with winners advancing to regional judging. Final judging will take place at the provincial level.

Winning entries will be reproduced for use as fire prevention posters across Ontario. Provincial winners are expected to be named by early June of this year.

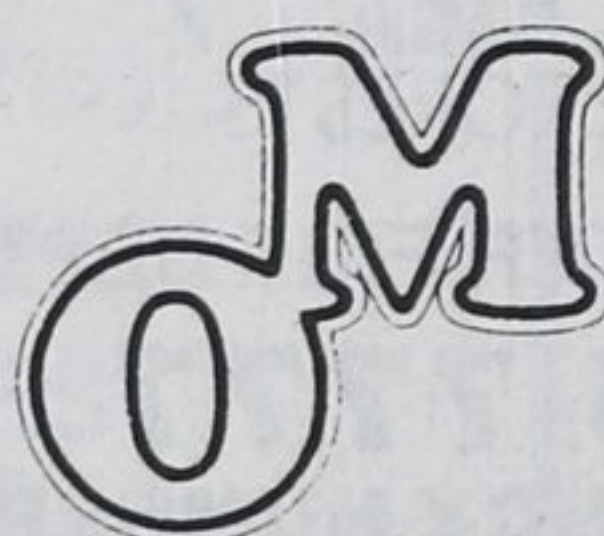
## Fire Prevention is You!

A message from the Wasaga Beach Fire Department

Help Prevent Forest Fires!

Midland Public Utilities Commission

526-9361



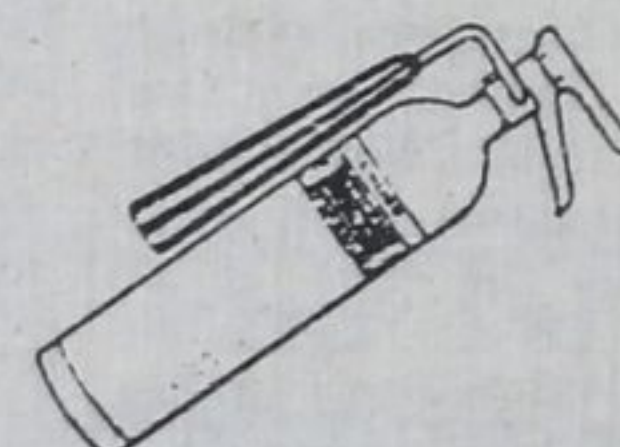
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