

Minimising Campfire Impact

One of the principles of Leave No Trace is to minimise the impacts of fires. Fires have the potential to cause serious damage to natural areas and to threaten homes and lives. It is essential that we ensure we use fires as safely as possible. Here are some general tips:

- Keep fires small, and supervise a fire at all times
- Do not use growing vegetation for use as firewood.
- For all fires, crush the cooled embers to ash, soaking with water to full quench, and disposing of the ash.
- Have water and a fire blanket available for emergencies.

Altar Fires

Building an altar fire on your patrol site is one way to ensure minimum impact. A proper built altar fire will keep the fire itself from damaging the surrounding environment. The most important thing about altar fires is safety. Your camp altar fire should be secure and sturdy to allow you to use the fire as safely as possible. The fire tray should not be free to move and it is a good idea for it to be between 45cm and 75cm off the ground. It is also important that the timber around fire tray is protected from the heat with mud/tinfoil.



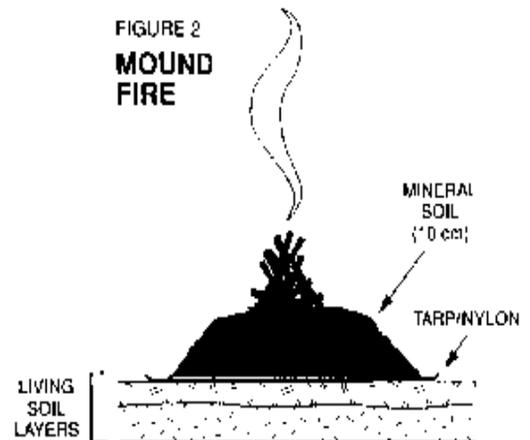
Fire Areas

Many campsites have assigned fire areas, which have solid bases and surrounding protections. These are also suitable places to build fires.

Mound Fire

If you have to make a fire somewhere else, a mound fire is one of the safest ways. The principle of a mound fire is that you create an insulating layer of mineral material between where you will have a fire and the soil. This is important for safety and for Leave No Trace.

1. Gather mineral soil from underneath a fallen tree, or collect sand from along a stream course. Use your stuff sack to carry the soil to where you are going to build the fire.
2. Clear a small area for the fire and cover it with a base. This can be a small piece of groundsheet or nylon (about a metre square), or a fire blanket, or in an emergency you can use a large flat rock (once it isn't shale).
3. Build up the mound of soil/sand on top of this base. The mound should be 4-6 inches/10-15cm thick and about 24 inches/60cm in diameter.
4. Make your fire in the centre of the mound.
5. When the fire is finished, it is a simple matter to return the mineral soil or sand to where it came from. The groundsheet allows you to remove even the signs of the mound



Activity:

Patrol Fires

Each patrol will have to light a fire safely, boil an egg (or similar challenge), and fully clean up afterwards by removing all traces of the fire (e.g., ash, dirt, firewood, etc.). This simple exercise will help scouts understand how fires can be used responsibly on camp.

Explain to the PLs that their patrol will have to:

- Select a safe area to light a fire, and set up an appropriate fire (eg build it in a fire are or make a mound fire).
- Gather and prepare firewood
- Light and maintain a fire
- Boil an egg, or similar challenge
- Extinguish the fire
- Clean up the site so no one can tell they have been there.



A scouter should check the site afterwards, focusing on how the site was cleaned up. Leave No Trace does not simply mean putting out the fire and removing rubbish. There should be as little evidence as possible that there ever was a fire there, including no scarring or scorching on the ground.

After wards have a discussion about the activity. Did it help the patrol understand how to clear up property after lighting a fire?

This activity has been modified from the Boy Scouts America teach Leave No Trace programme: <http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/TeachingLeaveNoTrace.aspx>