



# Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Public Service Announcement

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## **Unattended campfires not only dangerous, they could cost you**

In early May, Forest Service aircraft detected a fire at Sailor Lake Campground, located near Fifield, WI. Upon arriving at the site, Forest Service personnel determined the fire was caused by an out of control campfire at the campsite fire ring. No campers were at the site. The fire proceeded to pass through the campsite, burning down the tent, and continued burning toward an ATV trail near the site. The fire burned almost 4 acres.

While the fire was considered accidental, charges for detection, suppression, and eventual clean up of the site were incurred. It is very possible these campers will be held responsible for costs associated with the incident.

Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Supervisor Jeanne Higgins is hopeful similar incidents won't happen in the future. "Campfires can become dangerous very quickly if left alone. In this case, the campers left their fire unattended early in the morning when winds are normally calm. Over the course of the day, wind speeds and temperatures increased causing the campfire to leave the fire ring."

In the United States, 9 out of 10 wildfires are caused by humans, and the majority of these fires are accidental. People who visit the Chequamegon-Nicolet are advised on the correct way to build and put out a campfire:

### **Building a safe campfire:**

Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass, and leaves.

Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat. Use an existing fire ring if it's available.

Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.

Start with dry sticks and small sticks. Remember – a good fire builder never needs gas or kerosene to start a fire.

Add larger sticks as the fire builds up. Avoid using hatchets, saws, or breaking branches off trees. Dead and down woods burns easily.

Put the big pieces on last, pointing them toward the center, and pushing them into the flames. Use wood no larger than the diameter of an adult wrist.

### **Putting out your campfire:**

Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control.

Be sure your match is out cold. Break it so you can feel the charred portion before carefully discarding it.

Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers and sticks are wet. Move rocks – there may be burning embers underneath.

Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned materials have been put out and cooled. Smaller pieces of wood are easier to put out than large logs.

Feel all materials with your bare hand. Make sure that no roots are burning.

Campfires may be banned if wildfires likely. Watch for signs and obey them.

**REMEMBER, ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT WILDFIRES!**

The remains of a tent from a runaway campfire

