



Office of the State Fire Marshal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, August 24, 2012

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THE OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL ENCOURAGES CAMPERS TO PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY

Simple Strategies can Decrease Risks

SPRINGFIELD – The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) reminds campers to practice fire safety when using campfires. Fire safety is important when enjoying cooking, setting up campfires, or using lanterns outdoors.

The level of rainfall during the past couple of weeks has not remedied the extreme drought conditions affecting Illinois. Fire safety precautions are especially critical under drought conditions when there is a greater danger for brush fires.

“Camping should be a time for families to enjoy each other in a safe environment,” said State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis. “I encourage campers to be aware of rules and regulations and exercise common sense when grilling or setting up camp fires while enjoying outdoor activities.”

In Illinois, 212 uncontrolled campsite fires were reported in campgrounds between 2005 and 2012. All of these fires were avoidable if the proper safety procedures would have been followed. Sparks and embers from campfires can travel several hundred feet and catch grass and other combustibles on fire.

The following is a list of additional fire safety tips for campers:

- Be familiar with the campsite rules on campfires or grilling. If a fire ring is not available, select a site a safe distance away from dry grass, trees and tents
- Choose a site upwind from the sleeping area to prevent catching camping equipment or other combustibles on fire
- Avoid building fires in dry or windy conditions. Campfires should be at least 15 feet away from tents walls, shrubs, or other flammable materials
- Do not use gasoline or other petroleum based-liquids, as they can cause dangerous explosions
- Avoid using gel fuel pots, as the product may explode and can cause serious injuries

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- Keep your fire in a manageable size and a pail of sand or water nearby along with an extinguisher and a shovel in case they are needed to control a fire
- Never leave a grill or a campfire unattended. Keep children at least three feet away from grills or campfires. Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Make sure that grilling areas and campfires are completely extinguished before going to bed

For more information on campground fire safety, please visit www.sfm.illinois.gov or www.fire.ca.gov.

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