

Risk Assessment: Campfires and Cooking Forest Skills

Location:	Various	Completed by:	Blue Douglas	Date:	12 th June. 2026	Review Date:	12 th June 2027
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Description of site / activity / tools:

For some the campfire is a *nice experience*, whilst for other it is a necessity of sustaining themselves in a woodland setting. The management of fire is something which receives great emphasis during training. It is remembered that forest skills views fire and cooking as a communal act which is an addition to a programme; whilst bushcraft has it as one its central priorities and a necessity for cooking and maintaining heat during colder weather. Indeed, there is the possibility of those engaged in bushcraft activities may congregate around a fire during darkness. Also included in this risk assessment is the use of the Ghillie Kettle due to it being allied to fire and cooking.

	Hazard	Harm	People at Risk	Existing Control Measure	Likelihood (1-3)	Severity (1-3)	Rating LxS (1-9)	New Control Measure Who? When?	Comments
1.	Clothing catching alight	Burns	All	• Fire site introduction • Explanation of the fire site layout (three circles) • Demonstration of moving around the fire site • Ensure distance of 3ft around smaller fires and 2m for larger 'central fires'. • Advise the wearing of non-flammable clothing (this is included on Equipment List) • Fire blankets available • Advise to <i>Stop, Drop and Roll</i> • Fire Water Available • First aid kit to hand • Fires only to be lit in designated fire site	1	3	3		
2.	Fire is too/becomes large	Burns	All	• Fire management explained • Verbal warning of risk • Instructors to monitor the size of fuel • Fire Water Available • Instructors to extinguish fire if it becomes dangerous • Instructors to be present and monitor fire	1	3	3		

3.	Handling hot pots and pans	Burns	All	• Verbal warning of the risk • Heat proof gloves to be used • Distance of 3ft whilst kettles are boiling • Pan grips and lid lifters available • Fire Water Available • First aid kit to hand	2	3	6		The handle of the 5L kettle does not get hot when the kettle is full; however an empty kettle will get hot.
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4.	Carrying hot pots and pans	Burns to self & others/ damage to property (benches/tables)	All/ equipment	• Verbal warning of the risk • Heat proof gloves to be used • Check route is free from trip hazards • Ensure there is a place/trivet/board to put the pan down • Encourage participants announce “walking with a pan”	1	3	3		
5.	Fire during dry periods	Forest Fire/Burns	All/ Environment	• Judgement of the risk by instructors • Avoid the use of fire during dry periods • Fires kept in fire site/stone circle • Avoid fires on coniferous forest floors • Locate fire sites on earth • Dampen ground surrounding the fire site • Fire water available • Fire blanket available	1	4	4		
6.	Falling into fire	Burns	All	• Fire site management • Exit the fire site to the back • Remove trip hazards from fire site • Use of <i>Respect Position</i> to tend the fire	1	4	4		
7.	Boiling water/ pouring from kettle	Scolds	All	• Verbal warning • Water being boiled is tended • Remove water at first sign of boiling • Use of well-maintained pots/pans • Safe distance of 3ft adhered to • Controlled pouring • Heat proof gloves available	1	3	3		
8.	Spitting embers	Burns/Damage to cloths	All	• Verbal warning • Avoid manmade fibre clothing • Use well-seasoned wood • Avoid woods known to spit or cause embers (Chestnut or sap bearing woods)	1	1	1		

9.	Tarp/Tent Catching Fire	Burns/ Damage to equipment	All/ Equipment	- Camping tarps and tents located away from fire/fires away from tents & tarps - Fire tarp to be in high set up - Limit the size of fire under a tarp	1	3	3	Consider use of poly cotton tarp	
10	Contaminating food	Food poisoning	All	- Verbal warning <i>Clean hands/dirty hands routine</i> <i>(See Hygiene Risk Assessment)</i>	1	2	2		
11.	Smoke inhalation	Breathing difficulties	All	- Verbal warning - Avoid smoky areas - Use well-seasoned wood	1	2	2		

				Fires in open air					
12	Consumption of alcohol around a fire	Falling into fire	Individual	- Verbal warning of the increased risk - Alcohol is not allowed during any activities - If alcohol is consumed the individual will be informed that they are no longer part of the activity and requested to remove themselves from the site (pending there being little option for Compass staff to forcibly remove them).	3	3	9		consumption of alcohol is not allowed during any activities. If participants chose to consume alcohol they do so knowing that they are removing themselves from activities and thereby are no longer insured.
13	Ground Oven/ Dakota Fire Pit	Falling into fire/burns	All	- Verbal warning - All participants aware of location of fire pit - Other activities to avoid the area of ground oven/Dakota fire pit	1	3	3	- Consider installing barrier - If large group, fire to be tended	Due to the nature of these fires there are additional risks beyond those already identified
14	Placing/removing Ghillie Kettle from base	Burns from chimney	User	- Verbal warning - Demonstration - Participants safe distance - Handle horizontal - Heat proof gloves available	2	3	6	Use gloves at all times	
15	Ghillie Kettle falling over	Scolds from spilt water/burn on hot surface	All	- Verbal warning - Demonstration - Kettle used on level surface - Use of <i>exclusion zone</i> (3ft)	1	2	2	Burns Kit always available	

16	Ghillie Kettle boiling	Scolds	All	• Verbal warning • Demonstration • Use of safe distance <i>zone</i> • Kettle is tended throughout • Group made aware that a Kelly Kettle is being used • Other activities to avoid the area of the Ghillie Kettle	2	2	4		
17	Carrying Hot Ghillie Kettle	Burns/ Scolds	All	• See ' <i>Carrying hot pots and pans</i> ', number 4 above	1	3	3		
18	Pouring water from Ghillie Kettle	Scold	All	• Verbal warning • Demonstration • Pouring at arm's length • Pour using the bung chain	2	3	6		

				• Advise that the receiving cup to be elevated where possible • Heat proof gloves available					
Comments/Concerns: This risk assessment will be reviewed in the event of any incident or near miss in order to be fully informed for the future. It is not an exhaustive list, and is written with experience of FS activities in mind and the incidents (or lack of) that have been encounter in the preceding 2 years.					Recommendations: Reviewed June 26 For review June 27				