



Swedish Civil  
Contingencies  
Agency

# Lighting Fires and the Right of Public Access

Things to consider when lighting  
a campfire or barbecue outdoors



Fire has always been fascinating to humans. A crackling campfire enhances the outdoor experience. However, fires can also cause major devastation if not handled correctly. The Right of Public Access (Sw. Allemansrätten) grants no automatic right to light a fire. A fire is your personal responsibility and should only be lit in safe conditions.

## **Fire bans may be in force**

At times of high fire risk, the lighting of open fires can be forbidden. The municipality or the county administrative board issue fire bans to prevent forest fires. Information is posted on their websites showing which areas are covered, what is prohibited or allowed, and the period for which the fire ban applies. Information on fire risks and fire bans can also appear in local newspapers and on the radio, at campsites, in tourist information offices, or via the municipal rescue services. Some municipalities and county administrative boards also have special telephone services.



## **It is your responsibility to find out the rules**

Fire bans do not normally apply in built up areas. Normally, you are allowed to barbecue in your garden or allotment, in inner courtyards and yards connected to blocks of flats, as well as in parks and certain campgrounds. However, there may be restrictions in place that prohibit barbecues or the lighting of fires in urban areas. Ask the municipality which rules apply.

If you are camping in the countryside or wilderness, or staying in a secluded rural area, you should find out what applies for that specific area.

It is always your responsibility to find out whether lighting a fire or having a barbecue is allowed in your particular location. If you violate a fire ban you may be fined.

## **Map service for fire bans**

The county administrative boards have created a map service so you can see where in the country fire bans are active. You will find the map at [www.krisinformation.se/en](http://www.krisinformation.se/en).

## **Special rules for national parks and nature reserves**

Lighting fires in national parks and nature reserves is sometimes prohibited regardless of active fire bans. The rules are posted on notice boards in the area. Additional information is available from the municipality or county administrative board.

You can also find information on special rules for national parks and nature reserves at [www.nationalparksofsweden.se](http://www.nationalparksofsweden.se) and [www.lansstyrelsen.se](http://www.lansstyrelsen.se).

## If you light a campfire or barbecue

- **Choose the right location**

When building a fire, it is important to choose the right location, e.g. on gravel or sand. Whenever possible use a camping stove or a fixed barbecue area. Do not light a fire on peatland, moss, or in humus-rich woodlands. In these places, embers from the fire may penetrate deep into the soil and smoulder for a long time only to flare up later. Also avoid lighting fires near anthills or tree stumps; they are difficult to extinguish if they catch fire. Do not light fires directly on or beside rocks and large stones. They become discoloured and may crack.

- **Limit the fire**

Keep it small and limit the fire by digging up gravel or placing stones around it.

- **Only use appropriate fuel**

Appropriate fuel includes fallen branches, twigs, and cones on the ground. You may not use living trees. Using fallen trees as wood is also not permitted. Do not burn rubbish – a campfire is no place for waste incineration. Feel free to bring your own dry firewood so that you can light the fire easily.

- **Avoid using disposable grills**

Disposable grills can set fire to their surroundings. If you use a disposable grill, it is important that you place it correctly. They become very hot underneath and can cause fires when placed on wooden benches and tables, or in ground vegetation. Always place the disposable grill on a non-combustible surface, such as gravel or sand. Be sure to extinguish it and remember not to leave it outdoors. Always recycle disposable grills, some places have special disposal bins.

- **Do not light a fire in windy conditions**

Check the wind before you barbecue or light a campfire. Winds can carry sparks into the forest or dry grass and start a fire. If the wind increases, extinguish the fire.

- **Make sure there is water to extinguish the fire and embers**

You should always have access to water so that you can extinguish the fire and the remaining embers. Even if a fire has burned out the embers need to be properly extinguished.

## How to extinguish a fire

Allow the fire to burn out completely. Extinguish it thoroughly with water and stir until the embers die out. Embers can sink into the ground. It is therefore important to dig under the ashes and make sure that all embers under the fire pit are extinguished. Finally, make sure there is no visible smoke. It is a good idea to bring a small shovel and a water container to help extinguish fires. If you use briquettes or other fuel, remember that they need to be completely extinguished before you leave the site.

## If the fire spreads

How to act if the fire starts to spread:

- 1. Call 112**

Call 112 and alert the emergency services, and alert those threatened by the fire. You can also use the 112 app on your smartphone to automatically transmit your position. Describe what has happened and be prepared to answer questions.

- 2. Try to stop the fire in the direction of the wind**

You can use tree branches to stop the fire. Work in the direction of the wind. Remove all the twigs except for those at the top (1 metre or so) and if possible soak the branches first.

- 3. Try to subdue the fire**

Sweep burning material towards the fire, pressing the branches into the ground to smother the fire. Avoid beating the fire, as sparks will fly and the fire will flare up.

- 4. Remove combustible material**

Remove brushwood, twigs, moss, and other combustible material from the front of the fire that may cause the fire to spread.

## If your clothes catch fire

- Throw yourself quickly onto the ground and roll around. If someone else's clothes are on fire, lay the person down on the ground.
- Try to extinguish the fire by using water. Alternatively, use a blanket or jacket to smother the fire, pulling from the head downwards to prevent the flames from reaching the face. Remember that certain synthetic materials can flare up or melt and worsen an injury.
- Cool burns immediately using cold water. Continue the cooling efforts until the pain subsides, approximately 10 minutes.
- Do not remove clothes stuck to the skin.
- Seek medical attention.



## **Be careful when camping**

- Never use an open flame or hot coals in a tent or under a tent awning. Fires emit highly toxic gases.
- Never pour fuel into the burner of a camping stove until you are certain that the flame has burned out and the burner has cooled. The fuel in the container could ignite and the canister explode. You risk suffering severe burns.
- Tents can easily catch fire. Make sure that grills, hot plates, and similar equipment are placed at a safe distance from the canvas.

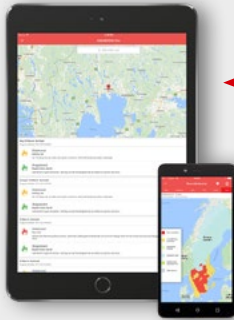
## **Things to have for barbecues and lighting campfires outdoors**

- Equipment and material to light the fire with
- Dry wood
- Water or something to gather water in
- Shovel
- Bag to collect rubbish
- Mobile phone to call 112 in case of emergency

## Keep a check on seasonal risk of fire!

BRANDRISK Ute is a mobile app, in Swedish, that can help you check on the risk of fire in forests and fields. The information will help you reduce the risk of starting grass and forest fires. It will also teach you more about safely lighting fires outdoors.

The app is available for iPhone, iPad, and Android. You can find it in the App Store or Google Play.



- Current risk of fire and forecast via GPS and search function
- Films
- Checklists
- Zoomable maps of Sweden:
  - Risk of grass fire
  - Risk of forest fire (ignition)
  - Risk of forest fire (spreading)

Read more (Swedish text) about risk of fires and how you can protect yourself against fire on the MSB Web site. There are also 6-day forecast maps for risk of grass and forest fire.

## In cooperation between:



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Order No. MSB1602 - June 2020