



FIRE SAFETY

Ways to stay dry,
Keep warm, and cook,
With Fire Prevention as Priority.



Types of Fire Dangers

Exposure to fire is one of the most hazardous things about being houseless. This guide is intended to help houseless people reduce risks and harm, while staying warm.

Staying Warm & Cooking: Using an open flame for cooking and keeping warm exposes us to all sorts of risks, such as flying sparks, catching clothing on fire, and smoke inhalation. Cooking with propane also presents dangers, such as leaky hoses that can leach dangerous toxins into the air. See slide 4 for tips and tricks for staying safe.

Police: Open flames and smoke can draw attention from the police, park rangers, security, etc.-- which presents an additional set of dangers. See the KNOW YOUR RIGHTS section for info on how to keep yourself safe(r) when encountering law enforcement.

Wildfire: It goes without saying that forest fires, brush fires, abandoned building fires, etc. are extremely dangerous. Be aware of your surroundings, climate, and weather; have a clear escape route planned at all times, and ensure that all in your group know the plan.

Arson: We want to be clear: it SHOULD NOT be our responsibility, as unhoused people, to prevent arson. That said, keeping a clean camp can help reduce unwanted attention. Work with your community members to keep things clutter-free; consider designating one person each day to be on trash duty.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

In Portland, police and contracted cleanup crews are required to post a sign with a date and time, giving at least 48 hours of notice (and not more than 10 days) before removing campsites (ORS 203.077). Other useful information:

- ***If you are stopped by the police***, Stay calm and keep hands visible. What you say can be used against you, so consider staying quiet. If you are not driving, you do not have to carry an ID. You do not have to identify yourself, but if you refuse, police may bring you in. Key phrase to say: “Am I free to go?”
- ***If you are driving***, you must show your license, registration, and proof of insurance. If you are suspected of drinking and refuse to take a breath test, your license can be suspended.
- ***If police want to search you***, they may pat you down to check for weapons. It is your right to not be searched further unless the officer has a search warrant. Make it clear you do not consent to any further search by saying, “I do not consent to this search!” If they say they have a search warrant, ask to see it.
- ***If you are arrested***, you do not have to answer any questions, other than identifying yourself. Don’t offer excuses or explanations. Anything you can be used against you. Just say, “I want to talk to a lawyer.” If you don’t have a lawyer, ask the police how to contact one.
- ***If you are the victim of police misuse of force***, document injuries immediately. Call CopWatch to find out options you may wish to pursue. **PORTLAND COPWATCH: 503-321-5120**

If you’re being swept in Portland, call the People’s Neighborhood Legal Collective Sweeps Support Hotline: 844-206-2005

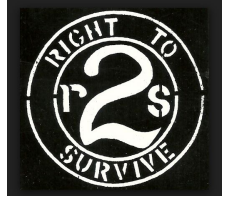
Preventive measures:

- Be VERY cautious about using any combustible (candle, sterno can, etc.) in a small space, especially tents; gases can linger.
- Lack of ventilation can cause carbon monoxide poisoning and death.
- Do NOT fall asleep inside a vehicle with the engine running.
- Do not leave fires and candles unattended.
- Candles tip easily; tents are highly flammable.
- Use caution! Highly flammable items include: Tents, tarps, tent waterproofing, over-charged batteries, matches left in the sun or in a hot vehicle.
- Designate a place for cigarette butts, filled with water or sand.
- Be especially cautious in dry conditions—even vehicle exhaust sparking can create brush fires.



RESTING SAFE

www.restingsafe.org



FIRE SAFETY

Above all: Keep your camp clutter-free, including clothes, papers, bags, etc. This is one of the most important fire prevention measures you can take!

Behavioral precautions:

- **Develop a fire escape plan; clear a path; make sure everyone in your site knows the plan.**
- Designate one person on trash duty each day; develop a system and hold each other accountable.
- Make sure that everyone in your group knows how to extinguish a fire.
- Move slowly near fires.
- Be cautious with long hair and loose clothing.
- Avoid starting fires while intoxicated.

Propane cooking:

- **Store propane tanks away from fire and heat, in the shade. Tanks can explode, even when empty!!! Do not store extra tanks.**
- Periodically check for faulty hoses, bad connections, leaks.
- Remember: water will NOT put out a grease fire; have a bucket of sand or dirt close by. If possible, get a fire extinguisher.

Wildfires:

- Stay hydrated!
- Get a "N95" mask if possible, otherwise cover mouth and nose with a wet washcloth or bandana

Lightning:

- If at all possible, **go indoors**. If not, stay at lower elevations, avoid mountain tops and steep slopes. **Do not stay in your tent.**
- **Crouch in a tight ball, close to the ground; wear rubber soled shoes.**
- Seek cover in forested areas; stay away from tall trees in open areas
- Avoid metal fences, power lines, handrails, and other metal objects.

Campfires:

- Clear all debris from the area
- Make your fire pit at least 30 feet from tents, clothes, flammable furniture, etc.
- Create a ring out of large rocks (NOT river rocks—they can explode), a steel drum, or something similar
- Have fire suppressant prepared, nearby: dirt or sand.
- Sparks cause fires; keep area clear of leaves and debris.
- Do NOT leave fires unattended. Put out fire fully before leaving.
- Designate one "fire-tender" each day/night, who cares for the fire and commits to staying awake
- Only put wood and paper in your campfire; no glass, river rocks, lighter, aerosols, etc.

RESTING SAFE

Houseless people are some of the hardest hit by environmental hazards, such as air, soil, and water pollution; flooding; winter storms and summer droughts; rodents and pests; police and vigilante violence. When people settle on polluted and hazardous sites— often the only land not slated for development or planned green space— people are exposed to dangerous living conditions. When residents express concern, police evict them.

A community controlled solution is necessary. Houseless people are incredibly knowledgeable about how to deal with such threats. RESTING SAFE brings together houseless activists, artists, and researchers to investigate and intervene in environmental hazards. One goal of RESTING SAFE is to pool collective knowledge, to help people learn from each other more easily. **Our ultimate goal is to support houseless communities in gaining greater control over urban space and fighting for more just land use, housing, and healthcare, and abolishing police.**

www.restingsafe.org

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