



Swedish Civil Defence  
and Resilience Agency

# Lighting Fires and the Right of Public Access

Things to consider when lighting a campfire or  
barbecue in the nature



In other  
languages



It's always up to you to find out if it is permitted and appropriate to light a fire or barbecue where you are – before lighting a fire.

Photo: Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, Niclas Kindahl

Fire has always fascinated humans. A crackling campfire enhances the outdoor experience. But it can also cause major devastation if handled the wrong way. The Right of Public Access (in Swedish: Allemansrätten) gives you a unique opportunity to roam in nature and is based on us all being responsible. But it does not give you an automatic right to build a fire - only an opportunity, at your own personal responsibility, to light a fire under safe conditions.

## **You are responsible**

Always find out what the rules are and whether it is appropriate to light a fire or barbecue. Every situation and place in nature is unique. The Right of Public Access works if we all take responsibility for assessing what is appropriate to do here and now.

1. Always find out whether you are allowed to light a fire or barbecue before lighting a fire - for example, if there is a fire ban in place or if there are other rules that restrict lighting fires where you are.
2. Check that there is not a high fire danger and always consider the risks of lighting a fire or barbecuing.
3. If you decide to light a fire or barbecue – be careful and safe.

It's always up to you to find out if it is permitted and appropriate to light a fire or barbecue where you are – before lighting a fire. You can be fined if you violate a fire ban. If you start a fire, you are responsible.

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



In times of high fire danger, it may be forbidden to light a fire or barbecue in the nature. The municipality or the County Administrative Board issue fire bans to prevent forest fires. They post information on their websites showing which areas are covered by the fire ban, what is prohibited or allowed, and the period for which the fire ban applies. Information on fire bans is also usually provided in local newspapers and on the radio, at campsites, tourist information offices or via the municipal fire and rescue services.

## Map service for an overview of fire bans

The County Administrative Boards have developed a map service to show where in the country there is a fire ban. You can find the map at [krisinformation.se/en](http://krisinformation.se/en)

## Always check the fire danger



Even if there is no fire ban, it may be inappropriate to light a fire or barbecue in the nature if the fire danger is high. In the mobile app Fire Danger Outdoors (in Swedish: Brandrisk Ute), you get information about the current fire danger and any fire bans, as well as advice and tips if you plan to light a fire or barbecue. Read more about the app on the last page of this brochure.

## Where does a fire ban apply?

A fire ban applies outdoors in forests and on open areas that are so close to a forest that the fire could easily spread there. Usually, you are allowed to barbecue in your own garden, in courtyards and patios of multi-family residential buildings, on your allotment, in parks and some campsites.

There may be other rules that prohibit fires or barbecues in urban areas. Check with the municipality which rules apply. If you are camping at a nature campsite, or staying alone in the wild, you should find out what applies to that particular area.



Photo: Johnér / Stefan Isaksson

## Special rules for national parks and nature reserves

The Right of Public Access also applies in nature reserves and national parks, but sometimes special regulations apply here. For example, it may be completely forbidden to light a fire. You need to check the rules for each area. Information is available on the website of the municipality or county administrative board. Sometimes information is also posted on notice boards in the area.

**You can find more information on special rules for national parks and nature reserves at:**

[sverigesnationalparker.se/en](https://sverigesnationalparker.se/en) and [lansstyrelsen.se](https://lansstyrelsen.se)

# If you light a fire or barbecue in the nature

**If you decide to make a fire or barbecue, consider this before lighting a fire:**

1. Use a fixed barbecue area, or build the fire on gravel or sand.
2. Limit the fire, for example with stones.
3. Feel free to bring your own dry firewood.
4. Do not light a fire in windy conditions.
5. Keep an eye on the fire and extinguish it before leaving – bring water and a small shovel.
6. Avoid using disposable grills.



## **1. Use a fixed barbecue area, or build the fire on gravel or sand**

If you are building a fire, it is important to choose the right location. The best choice is a fixed barbecue area built specifically for barbecuing.

These are enclosed, for example with concrete pipes or stone, and have a wide surrounding ground surface with gravel or other fire-proof material. If there is no fixed barbecue area, you should choose a place with gravel or sand, far from vegetation or combustible material. A camping stove can be useful.

Do not build a fire directly on or beside rocks. They become discoloured and may crack. Do not light a fire on peatland, moss or on humus-rich woodland. In such places, the embers from the fire may penetrate deep into the ground and smolder for a long time and flare up later. Also avoid lighting fires near anthills or tree stumps; they are difficult to extinguish if they catch fire.

## **2. Limit the fire, for example with stones**

The easiest way to do this is by digging up gravel or placing smaller stones around the fire. Keep it small.



## **3. Feel free to bring your own dry firewood**

Feel free to bring your own dry firewood to easily light the fire. Remember you are not allowed to cut down living or dead trees and shrubs. Nor are you allowed to take twigs, branches or birch bark from living trees and use as firewood. You are also not allowed to burn rubbish!



## **4. Do not light a fire in windy conditions**

Check the wind before starting a fire. The wind can carry sparks into the forest or onto dry grass, which can start a fire. If the wind increases, extinguish the fire.



## 5. Keep an eye on the fire and extinguish it before leaving – bring water and a small shovel

You always need to have access to water to extinguish the fire. Even if the fire has burned out and the flames have died, the embers also need to be extinguished properly.

Rake the ashes a little with the shovel to make sure there are no embers left. Embers may also penetrate the ground. Therefore, it is important to dig under the ashes and make sure that all the embers under the fire pit are extinguished. Then check that there is no visible smoke. All fuel must be completely extinguished before you leave the site.

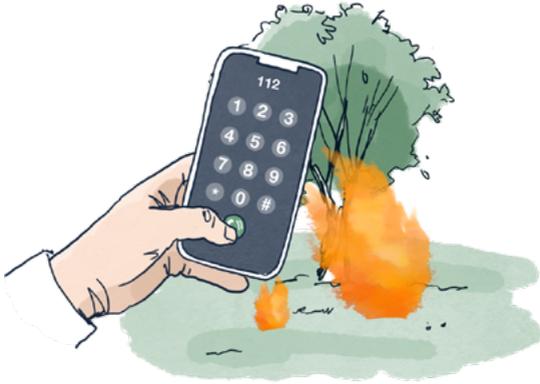


## 6. Avoid using disposable grills

Disposable grills can ignite the surrounding area. If you use a disposable grill, it is important that you place it correctly. They get very hot underneath and can cause fires in wooden benches and tables or in ground vegetation. Therefore, always place the disposable grill on a non-combustible surface, such as on a fixed barbecue area, gravel or sand. Do not use a disposable grill on rocks or large stones as they may crack. Be sure to extinguish it and remember not to leave it in the nature. Always sort and recycle disposable grills. Sometimes there are special collection containers for disposable grills.



## If the fire spreads



If the fire starts to spread, do this:

### **Call 112**

Call 112 and alert the emergency services. Warn those threatened by the fire. You can also use the 112 app on your mobile phone to automatically share your location. Describe what has happened and be prepared to answer questions.

### **Use a tool to stop the fire from spreading**

Use a tool such as a rake or larger shovel. You can also make a tool out of tree branches. Create a handy tool for yourself, remove the branches closest to you. If possible, wet the tree branches.

Suppress, limit and prevent the fire from spreading by:

- Pushing down the flames using the tool.
- Sweeping burning material towards the fire.
- Removing twigs, branches, moss and other combustibles in front of the flames that may cause the fire to grow and spread.

## If your clothes catch fire

- Quickly drop to the ground and put out the flames by pressing whatever is burning against the ground. If someone else's clothes are on fire, lay the person on the ground.
- First try to extinguish the fire with water. Otherwise, you can use a blanket or jacket to smother the fire by pulling it from the head down to prevent the flames from reaching the face. Remember that some synthetic materials can flare up or melt and worsen the injury.
- Immediately cool burns by using cold water. Continue the cooling efforts until the pain stops, about 10 minutes.
- Do not remove clothes stuck to the skin.
- Seek medical attention.



## Safety tips for camping

- Never use an open flame or hot coals in a tent or under an awning. The fire emits 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 bottle could ignite and the bottle explode. You risk suffering severe burns.
- Make sure that barbeques, hotplates and similar things are placed at a safe distance from the canvas, as a tent can easily catch fire.



Photo: Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, Niclas Kindahl

## Packing list for lighting fires or barbecuing in the nature

Equipment and materials you can bring to light and extinguish the fire with:

- Dry firewood; both thin and thick firewood.
- Water in a bottle. Alternatively, something to collect water in.
- Small shovel to stir to extinguish the embers.
- Rubbish bag - to collect rubbish and dispose it in a proper place.
- Mobile phone to check the fire danger with the Fire Danger Outdoors (in Swedish: Brandrisk Ute) app. In case of an accident, alert the emergency services by calling 112.

The Right of Public Access is based on us all being responsible. We treat animals well, show consideration for landowners and take care of nature.

Please save the brochure!

# Keep track of current fire danger and fire bans!

**Fire Danger Outdoors** (in Swedish: Brandrisk Ute) is a mobile app that helps you keep track of the fire danger and makes it easier for you to make smart decisions. In the app, you will also find the status of fire bans where you are.

- Current fire danger.
- 5-day forecast.
- Fire ban status.
- Advice and recommendations on lighting fires and other types of activities.

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

Read more about the app and fire danger forecasts on Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency website.



App Store



Google Play

A collaboration between:



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