

FIRE AS A PLAY ACTIVITY

This fact sheet was written as the author became aware that playworkers in adventure playgrounds or similar, feel that they can no longer have fires as part of their play activities. Sometimes they have been advised by those with some jurisdiction over them (but without sufficient knowledge) that it appears to be a myth with no foundation in fact.

There is no reason why fires should not be part of a supervised play activity and this has been recognised for at least fifty years.

The most relevant guidance can be found in the publication **“Risk and Safety in Play – The law and practice for adventure playgrounds”** (1997). It is recognised by the Health and Safety Executive giving guidance on good practice and is widely accepted as authoritative by managers of adventure playgrounds and national play organisations. The publication was compiled following widespread consultations amongst playworkers, national organisations and safety specialists and is the successor publication to “Towards a Safer Adventure Playground” published by NPFA and itself subject to widespread consultation.

It was previously published by E & FN Spon and is now available as an e-book and paperback from Routledge. It may also be available via Amazon.

<https://www.routledge.com/Risk-and-Safety-in-Play-The-law-and-practice-for-adventure-playgrounds/Potter/p/book/9780419223702>

Any adventure playground or play centre would be wise to have this publication readily available for reference and should be used in in-service training of staff, so that they are familiar with its contents and are used to using it for reference. It contains much useful advice as well as the section on ‘Fires’.

This fact sheet does not intend to replicate the advice given in that document but to explain the most appropriate source of guidance.

The guide covers such advice as ‘Keeping the fire area sited away from high activity areas and from structures. Keeping a supply of water, sand or loose soil nearby. Having a fire blanket if it is a cooking fire, having clean cold water immediately available in case first aid is required and that the fire should not be left unattended.’ It also lists dangerous items which should not be thrown onto an open fire such as batteries, bottles, tyres, empty containers of flammable agents, etc.

Rob Wheway MSc, MEd, MCIMSPA, MCMI, FRSA
Director
Children’s Play Advisory Service
13 August 2008