

Outdoor Ethics Corner: The Benefits of a LNT fire.



LNT (Leave No Trace) stresses making small fires if a fire is needed using small twigs no bigger than you could break with your bare hands. This is about a half inch diameter. The goals for these fires in a wilderness area are:

- Minimize the impact to the surrounding area
- End up with only completely burned gray ash that can be dispersed and hidden. In other words there are no partially burned sticks that are harder to conceal.
- The fire location should be restored with no trace that a fire had been there.

These goals can be helpful in front country camping with an established fire ring.

1. Using small sticks for the campfire
 - Small sticks are easy to find, they are usually cleared out of the tent area.
 - No tools, axe yards etc. are needed.
 - Small sticks burn quickly. As the fire starts to die down, a handful of small sticks will bring the fire back to life quickly, logs take a long time to start going.
 - Scouts love to feed the fire. With a collection of small sticks collected by most of the scouts they can all take turns feeding the fire.
 - Small sticks that are mostly burned to coals can be easily pulled together into a small pile and put out with a small amount of water, or if weather permits covered with a pot or lid and let to burn to grey ash.
 - These fires are especially helpful when arriving at camp later at night. Up and warming quickly and down just a fast.
2. At a front country camp fire ring obviously it does not have to disappear but it can be restored.
 - A fire ring should not contain partially burned logs or trash.
 - Some campers feel it important to clean the fire ring by dumping its contents in the brush just outside the camp. This just makes another ugly spot that detracts from the site. These piles can be used as a source of burnable charcoal that has already shown it can burn. Taking from these piles can hopefully make them disappear. A pile at the edge of camp might lead other campers to assume this is accepted practice.

If you are staying at a camp for several days using larger logs is fine. Choose logs that are completely burned up at the end of the stay. Often front country campsite managers do not want outside wood brought in. In some areas it is illegal and comes with a big fine. They often supply logs that are larger than could be burned in a weekend. Bring tools to split the wood safely and turn it into smaller burnable pieces.

