

Camp News

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Illness Outbreaks and Other Emergencies at Camps

In recent summers, there have been several illness outbreaks at camps in San Bernardino County. You can help prevent the spread of illness by practicing good hygiene such as washing hands thoroughly, especially after using the restroom. Pre-screening of campers and staff, and good food-handling practices by cafeteria workers can also help cut down on the likelihood of an outbreak at your camp.



If an outbreak does occur, [please notify](#) the Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) as soon as possible. Even if you're not sure if it's really an outbreak, but you suspect that it is, give us a call. We can be a resource to you in helping to stop the outbreak. Please notify us of any other type of emergencies (drownings or near drownings, fires, etc.) that occur at a camp.

Fire!

Did you know that someone dies in a fire every 169 minutes in the United States? (Source: [CDC Fire Deaths and Injuries Fact Sheet-2010.](#)) As a camp operator, you can take steps to prevent your campers and staff from being harmed in a fire.



Preventing fire-related deaths and injuries starts with having well-trained staff. Make sure you have a fire training program for all your staff, so they understand how to properly use fire extinguishers and how the camp evacuation procedures work.

The recent wildfires that have devastated Colorado are a reminder that camps must be prepared for forest fires. If your camp is located in or near a forest, make sure you have a plan on how you will evacuate campers and staff in the event of a wildfire. Your wildfire evacuation plan may need to be different than your normal evacuation plan, so be sure to consider alternate routes and ways to safety depending on your geographical location and proximity to the forest.

When new campers arrive, take a few minutes to explain to them how to activate the fire alarm, and what to do in case of a real fire. When a new camping session begins, you should hold a fire drill within the first day of campers arriving. It's a good idea to hold a drill each week. If your campers are staying for more than a week, you should hold at least one drill during sleeping hours. Although your campers may not be excited about being woken up in the middle of the night, it's necessary to hold nighttime fire drills for several reasons. First, campers could be disoriented during a fire at night because they are sleepy. Evacuation at night takes longer than during the day because people tend to be confused as to what's going on. Secondly, the darkness outside (combined with possible heavy smoke and loss of electricity/lighting) could make the campers even more disoriented. Practicing how to evacuate their cabins safely at night will make your campers better prepared in the event there is a nighttime fire.

For more information about fire drill requirements for organized camps, please see the California Fire Code, California Code Of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter 1, Article 3.

Camp Booklet Available Online

If you ever have questions about health and safety requirements for organized camps, you can access the [Laws and Regulations Relating to Organized Camps booklet](#) on our website. DEHS prepared this booklet with excerpts from the California Health and Safety Code, and the California Code of Regulations as a quick reference guide for camp operators in San Bernardino County.



Winterizing Camps

If you operate an organized camp that closes after the summer season, it's important to remember to winterize your camp so that it's in good working order when you return next summer.

Make sure to winterize camp buildings against vector infestations. Rats and squirrels seek warmer climates for building nests. Rodents work at night to gather food and often gnaw on electrical wires, potentially causing fires. Here are some tips to prevent vector infestations while your camp is closed:

- Seal all entryways, cracks, and holes in siding, doors, window screens, and areas around pipes
- Practice good sanitation by cleaning up crumbs and spills
- Store dry food in sealed containers
- Clean under counter-top appliances and large kitchen appliances



If your camp has a swimming pool, remember to winterize it before leaving for the season.

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