

## **Scouts BSA Safety Scenario for March: The Lighter Fluid Flash Burn**

### **For Scouts BSA (Ages 11–16)**

Your troop is on a weekend campout, and the patrols are preparing dinner. It has been raining most of the afternoon, and the firewood is damp. One patrol struggles to get their fire going. A Scout says, “This is taking forever. My dad uses lighter fluid at home—this will help.”

Before anyone can respond, the Scout grabs a bottle of lighter fluid from the troop trailer. The Scout squirts fluid directly onto the smoldering fire. The flames suddenly flare up with a loud *whoosh*, and a burst of heat flashes outward.

The Scout jumps back, dropping the bottle. Their hand is red and painful from the brief flash burn. Another Scout quickly calls for an adult. The injury is minor but requires first aid and later evaluation.

A Scout nearby says quietly, “We shouldn’t tell anyone we used lighter fluid. We’ll get in trouble.”

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### **Leader’s Guide: The Lighter Fluid Flash Burn**

#### **Purpose of This Scenario**

This scenario helps Scouts understand:

- Why accelerants like lighter fluid are dangerous and prohibited in scouting
- How quickly fire behavior can change
- Why Scouting America has strict rules about fuels
- How to respond to burns safely
- Why reporting injuries and near misses is required
- How to reinforce safe fire-building practices

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#### **Key Teaching Points**

##### **1. This Was a Preventable Injury With Serious Potential**

Even though the burn was minor, the situation could have caused:

- Severe burns to the face, hands, or arms
- Clothing ignition
- A spreading fire
- Injury to multiple Scouts

The potential severity makes this both an **incident report** and a **near-miss learning opportunity**.

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## 2. What the Guide to Safe Scouting Says About Using Fuels

Scouting America's *Guide to Safe Scouting* includes clear expectations regarding fuels:

- **Do not use accelerants (like lighter fluid, gasoline, or similar products) to start or enhance fires.**
- **Never add liquid fuel to an active or smoldering fire.**
- **Chemical fuels and open flames must be handled only by knowledgeable adults.**
- **Youth should use only age-appropriate fire-starting methods**, such as tinder, kindling, fire starters, and proper fire-lay techniques.
- **Fuels must be stored securely and used only under adult supervision.**

A key discussion question for Scouts: **“What does the Guide to Safe Scouting say about using fuels to start a fire?”**

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## 3. Reinforce Safe Fire-Building Practices

Discuss with Scouts:

- How to build a fire with wet wood using proper technique
- How to use fire starters safely
- How to maintain a safe distance from flames
- Why patience and teamwork matter
- How to communicate concerns before acting

This is an opportunity to teach skill, not assign blame.

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#### **4. Teach Proper Burn Response**

Review with Scouts:

- Stop the activity immediately
  - Cool the burn with clean, cool water
  - Cover with a sterile dressing
  - Seek medical evaluation for any burn larger than a quarter or involving the face, hands, or joints
  - Document and report the incident
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#### **5. What Leaders Should Do After an Injury**

- Provide appropriate first aid
  - Document the incident factually
  - Submit the required Scouting America incident report
  - Review fire-building procedures with the troop
  - Re-train Scouts on safe fire-starting methods
  - Ensure proper fuels, not accelerants as listed in GTSS, are secured and accessible only to adults.
  - Debrief with youth leaders to reinforce expectations
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#### **Suggested Leader Discussion Prompts**

- “Why did the fire flare up so suddenly?”
- “What does the Guide to Safe Scouting say about using lighter fluid?”
- “How could this injury have been prevented?”
- “Should there be lighter fluid – an accelerant - in the trailer at all?”
- “Is hand sanitizer dangerous around flame?”

- “Why is reporting this incident important for future safety?”
  - “What safer methods could we use to start a fire in wet conditions?”
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### **Takeaway Message for Scouts**

**Fuels and accelerants are never safe fire-starting tools. Reporting injuries and near misses protects the next Scout who tries to light a fire.**

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### **Special Bonus Discussion for this Scenario**

What if, in the scenario above, it is one of the adult leaders who squirts the lighter fluid onto campfire? (For this variation assume no one is injured.) Is it permissible for an adult to do this? What should scouts do if they see an adult violating the rules in the Guide to Safe Scouting?