

Fire Safety Guidelines

The Carnival of the Divine Imagination
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Fire twirling is fun. But it can also be dangerous. To maximise the safety of ourselves and others, it is important to be aware of the dangers that fire can present. By following some simple guidelines (many of which are common sense) we can ensure that we will twirl in a safe manner and further enjoy the beauty of this dynamic art.

Common Sense

NEVER fire twirl under the influence of any drug, including alcohol. Check the equipment you use to fire twirl is free from damage including loose screws, frayed wick, deteriorating grips or other obvious defects. Only twirl with fire what you are competent and comfortable doing and have practised extensively with unlit equipment. Don't twirl in areas that are a fire danger, for example with overhanging trees, dry grass or loose foliage. Be aware of wind direction and that flames may travel if the wind is too strong.

Personal Safety

Do not fire twirl alone, especially if you are new to fire twirling -- a second person can watch over your safety while you are using fire and help in case of any accident. Wear clothes of natural fibres (like cotton) that are not floppy or loose to avoid setting yourself on fire. Make sure you have safety equipment handy such as a fire blanket or damp cloth (that is *never* used to mop up fuel).

Safety of Others

Be very aware of your environment and the people in it. Make sure you have a lot of space around you when you fire twirl and keep an eye out for people who may wander by while you are twirling.

Fuels

The most common fuel used for fire twirling is kerosine. It is an inexpensive and readily available fuel that has good qualities for twirling (a low burn temperature and high flash point). Similar fuels that are good for twirling include odourless kerosine and citronella oil. Make sure your fuel is in a well labeled, sealed container. NEVER ignite a fuel that you do not know is safe to twirl with. If you are unsure, you can obtain an MSDS from your supplier to assess it's safety properties.

Dipping

Dedicate a dipping space separate from the space you will be twirling in. At all times, keep fire away from the fuel and the dipping area. Fully submerge the wick in your fuel dipping container for a few seconds. Shake off as much of the excess fuel as possible to ensure that when you light up, you will not 'flick' ignited drops of fuel about your space.

Lighting

Light AWAY from the dipping area with a candle or a lighter. Always light from below the wick to avoid engulfing the lighting instrument in flames. If you are using a lighter, do not keep it in your pocket or on your body while you are fire twirling - if it were to heat up it could explode.

Extinguishing

Fire wicks will naturally go out after a few minutes of twirling. Many people prefer to extinguish the wick either to end a twirling set or to prolong the life of the wick (a smoldering wick will deteriorate faster than one that is extinguished). If a wick is nearly exhausted, you can blow it out starting at the base of the wick. Otherwise, smother it in a fire blanket or damp towel.

Be careful of your surroundings. If you drop your fire staff or poi, or if any fuel drips off your lit fire equipment, it may ignite the ground. The easiest way to put out small ground fires is to firmly stand on them in your shoes.

Should your clothing or any other object catch alight, smother immediately with either a fire blanket, damp towel or anything else available to put out the fire. Do not pat the fire as this will only encourage the flame -- cover it and hold until it is extinguished. Or extinguish with a fire extinguisher if one is available. If nothing is available and you have caught alight, drop to the ground and roll to extinguish the flame.

First Aid

Tend to any burns by running the burn under cold running water. If the burn is major, seek medical attention.