

Fire Safety Information

See associated Risk Assessment – but note that there is always a managed element of risk with fire-spinning

Fire spinning and performance can be very dangerous if done without the knowledge and respect the fuel and fire deserve. However, if treated properly the risks involved with fire performance can be minimised.

Navigators may only do “live” fire spinning under supervision.

Before Spinning Fire

- Practise with your prop unlit until you’ve gained a high level of competence with it before considering your first burn. This reduces the chance of you getting into trouble while fire spinning and increases your confidence.
- Be comfortable using fire. Fire can make some people justifiably nervous – being comfortable controlling fire is important as too many nerves can stop you thinking clearly. Don’t be pressured into spinning fire if you don’t feel ready. **SAFETY FIRST.**
- Check all your props before EVERY time you spin fire. Make sure there are no loose or worn parts and your props are maintained properly. If in doubt, **NEVER USE THE PROP!** Fire props are submitted to an aggressive environment which will degrade them rapidly. Although the materials used will minimise degradation, individual styles and performances will impact on the lifespan of a particular prop. It is the end users responsibility to ensure the props are still suitable for use.

Fuel

- The only fuel we recommend is paraffin (also known as kerosene, Parasene and other brand names). Paraffin burns at a relatively low temperature which helps to minimise the risk of burns. Paraffin has quite a high flash point (the temperature at which it will ignite from a naked flame) and needs to be soaked into a wick before it will ignite. Paraffin is non-explosive under normal conditions. There are other suitable fuels but none as safe as paraffin. **NEVER USE PETROL, GASOLINE, DIESEL OR THEIR DERIVATIVES – THESE FUELS READILY EXPLODE!**
- Paraffin is toxic and contact with the skin should be avoided. If you do get fuel on your skin it should be rinsed off immediately. Should paraffin come into contact with your eyes they should be rinsed while held open for 15 minutes and medical advice should be sought immediately. If swallowed do **NOT** induce vomiting but drink plenty of water and seek medical advice.
- In the UK paraffin is often sold in thin plastic containers. Ideally, it should be transferred to a metal or thicker plastic jerry can. This should be safely stored away from children and heat sources and be labelled appropriately.

Preparing to Spin

- Never spin fire alone, even if you are an experienced fire spinner. Make sure someone responsible is keeping an eye on things – a safety officer.

- Pick a good spot. Perform a risk assessment of your location to determine if it's a good place to spin fire or not. Don't spin fire too close to buildings or trees, make sure there are no flammable materials close by, and make sure the ground is solid and not slippery. Try to spin on level ground. Make sure you're permitted to use fire – some parks do not allow fire spinning. Never spin fire on heathland, in forests or on moorland. Never use fire indoors.
- Be aware of the weather: never spin in windy conditions – if in doubt, don't spin fire.
- In light winds keep your back towards the wind – this will keep flames away from you.
- Be aware of ice or puddles and if it's hot make sure there isn't any dry grass, leaves or anything else that will ignite easily close by.
- Keep your refuelling area well away from your performance area and extinguishing area. Fuel should not be left in open containers – it should be returned to a sealed jerry can while you are spinning.
- Your dipping pot should be metal and not plastic or glass.
- Make sure you have safety equipment like fire blankets, a bucket of sand, a damp thick towel and a fire extinguisher. Make sure you have an extinguisher suitable for putting out liquid fires – CO2 or foam extinguishers are best. Water fire extinguishers are NOT suitable for liquid-based fires. Make sure you and your safety officer know how to use your fire extinguisher and the relevant safety considerations involved in their use.
- Excess fuel on your props should be removed, ideally by squeezing it off into your dipping pot with thick, non-absorbent gloves. You can “spin” fuel off by spinning unlit props quickly but this isn't good for the environment and you should make sure you don't spray people or objects that can act as a wick with the excess fuel. Failure to remove excess fuel can result in drops of burning fuel flying off your props – this is extremely dangerous.
- Wear thick, fire-resistant clothing such as cotton or denim. Do not wear synthetic clothing; it will melt before sticking to the skin. Avoid baggy clothing.
- Tie up long hair and protect with a thick hat made from non-synthetic material. Dampening your hair can work well too. Avoid using flammable hair products before you spin fire.

While Spinning

- If you are spinning fire for the first time, try it in the daylight.
- Light props away from your body and face and any observers.
- Burn offs: are done with a staff to produce fire balls from excess fuel. We recommend you squeeze or spin off all excess fuel (see above) before burning but if you are going to burn off do so carefully. Be aware of the wind direction so neither you nor your audience is in the path of the fire ball.
- Only use tricks and moves you are comfortable doing. Fire spinning is not the time to try new moves.
- Different props have different dangers – be aware of them. Poi, for example, can wrap themselves around you and get tangled. Staffs don't but are a danger to you and your audience if they slip from your grip while spinning.
- If you are lucky enough to have an audience keep them at a safe distance. Keep your eyes on them and get your safety officer to do so as well. Do not let people use your fire props unless you know they are skilled and knowledgeable enough to use fire.

- If you are performing at an official event or in a public place you will need public liability insurance with additional heat/fire cover and you should follow all the terms and precautions laid out in your policy. Failure to do so may invalidate your insurance. We advise all users to have proper insurance.
- FIRE BREATHING – is the most dangerous of fire arts. We strongly recommend you do NOT breathe or perform BODY BURNING. If you are going to, research the best practices and dangers thoroughly first. Practice the technique with water first and learn from an experienced performer. Always test your equipment thoroughly for any damage or irregularities before every performance or practice session. The risks associated with fire-eating and breathing are significantly higher than with other fire-based skills, and as such, the safety margin and precautions must be adapted appropriately. -- Navigators accepts no responsibility what so ever for any injury, both short term and long term, caused by or linked with fire eating, fire breathing or body burning should anyone opt to practise these skills in their own time and at their own location.. If you perform these skills you are solely responsible for ALL potential consequences.
- Extinguishing props – extinguish your props by fully smothering the wicks with a damp towel or fire blanket. Start at the end of the wick closest to you so any remaining flames are pushed away from you. NEVER extinguish props in fuel.
- Refuelling – let your props cool down before refuelling. Warm wicks can be submerged in paraffin. Use a metal fuel dipping pot as hot parts can melt plastic containers or crack glass ones.

Storage

- Store props in a well-ventilated, non-living space – long term exposure to fuel fumes is hazardous to your health.
- Do not store props in direct sunlight or high-temperature environments.
- Keep fuel and props well out of reach of children and pets.
- Wick covers or socks can be used to protect wicks and stop them from marking clothes and other objects.