

Bucket Brigade



This activity center is part of the Water Attitudes theme.

What's the purpose of this activity?

Students compare fire-fighting methods of the 1800s to those of the 1990s. They take part in the activity and they can talk to the fire fighters (not all festivals have fire fighters attend) and see the modern fire trucks and equipment.

Materials

Permanent:

- 10 medium size pails (for kids to carry)
- 4 large garbage pails
- enough plastic balls to fill 2 of the large pails.

What will I be doing?

You will be helping the children simulate historic fire fighting methods. You will explain to the students that water is important not only for our health, but also for safety since many fires are extinguished with water. If fire fighters are around, *they* may talk about types of fires that cannot be extinguished with water.

Make sure to ask questions and relate the situation to their every day lives. For example, ask about situations where we start fires intentionally (ex: barbecue, camp fires, fire places, etc.) for a purpose; fires that are under control.

There should be enough buckets at your activity center for each child to have one. You may want to have them sit in a circular formation so that you have their attention. They will be distracted from the issue of fire, then surprised by someone pretending that there is a fire. Everyone will get into formation for a "bucket brigade" to put out the fire. This illustrates the manual labor involved before municipal water and fire hydrants and trucks came to be used in Canada. Either afterwards, or while children are waiting for the next group to finish, they can talk to the local fire fighters (if fire fighters attend your festival) to understand some of the modern techniques and equipment.

Start by having the children pretend they are living in the year 1800 (or 1850). What would we be doing if we were pioneers? We may be asleep at home, or doing chores when we get home from school. Maybe it's a Saturday night and we're at a barn dance (or a street dance). You may want to have them pretend to dance so they aren't thinking about fires. Maybe we were getting ready for bed after a long day working the fields.

All of a sudden one of the volunteers yells "FIRE"!

Point to a spot that you have chosen to represent the building on fire. Everybody should feel rushed in having to act quickly to form a line to hand the buckets along in order to move water from the source to throw on the fire. It's hard to hand the buckets quickly without spilling, but that's the idea!

The person drawing water from the source (i.e., the first person in the bucket brigade) should be an adult, NOT a kid if it is a real creek, pond or river. Volunteers should have the brigade last for about 2 minutes or for a certain number of buckets only (ideally the bucket of each kid in the group should be used once). Ideally the brigade should have someone drawing water from the creek and then the last child tossing the water back into the creek. This prevents the area from getting slippery.

This activity requires a lot of energy from its volunteers. Cheer the children on. You may want to time each group.

Recap by asking kids what we do now, if there's a fire. Dial 911, use a fire extinguisher, etc. Did pioneers (1750-1850) have fire trucks and hydrants? Is water still important for putting out fires? Was water important for pioneers, too? What are some ways, besides dousing fires, that water was important for pioneers? Is water important for us in the same ways? Why or why not?

Some relevant information to mention...

Some ways to prevent fires: don't play with matches, lighters or fireworks/firecrackers. Don't leave your barbecue on with nobody watching and don't ever leave your campfire burning.