

## TENT CARE

Your tent is your shelter in bad weather and your protection from the elements in the great outdoors. With proper care, a quality tent can last many years and provide you with many days and nights of clean, warm, comfortable shelter.

You need to take care of your tent to ensure that it serves you for many seasons. There are many ways a tent can deteriorate. Weather and the UV rays from sunlight will degrade the fabric and decrease the protection your tent can offer. UV rays have the most adverse affect on lightweight and synthetic tent fabric. It can also cause the fabric to fade, lose strength, and eventually disintegrate. Care should be taken that the tent be pitched in shade and should not be left pitched in the sun when not in use. If a tent must be pitched in the sun, erect a tarp over the tent to protect from weather and UV rays.

You can also minimize damage to your tent by following the care instructions included with each tent and keeping tent abuse to a minimum.

Here are some tips to help you extend the life of your tent.

### **Prior to camp**

- Before you take your tent camping, set it up somewhere out of direct sunlight. Check the tent and make sure nothing is missing. Put on the fly and make sure to anchor it down and draw it tight.
- Are all the guy-lines there?
- Do you have enough tent pegs (that aren't bent)?
- Are there any tears or damage to the flysheet?
- Any holes or damage in the groundsheet?
- Are the stitched seams still fully sealed on the inside?
- Do all the zips run freely?
- Usually the poles are first items to break, since they receive the most stress. Think about the torturous bend they have to go through in order support your tent and the amount of stress this puts on the metal. Check all poles carefully.
- Another common problem is a ripped pole sleeve. Duct tape can be used to repair small tears. Duct tape does not stick to moist areas and when it is cold. Use a lighter to warm up the tape and apply it to the rip. Continue to use the lighter on the tape so it can meld to the tent fabric better.
- Inspect all zippers. Tent zippers have to zip in circles or arches and are under incredible stress from the tent.

### **During Camp**

- If at all possible never roll-up or pack away a wet tent as this will result in fungus and will destroy the tent.
- Always pack the tent as loosely as possible

- While packing the tent to fit it in the stuff sack, don't fold the fabrics at the same place every time as over the period of time, an established fold line creates a pleat that can crack the waterproof coating.
- Never use insecticide, hair spray, etc., inside or near to the tent, as this may harm the tent fabric and cause leakage.
- Never pack or store a dirty tent. Dirt can encourage fungus which can form and ruin the waterproof coating on your tent. Fungus will cause your tent to smell and can eventually delaminate and damage the polyurethane coating. This will cause the tent to leak.
- To protect tent poles and to keep the segments sliding easily, apply a light coat of lubricant on regular intervals.
- Also lubricate the zippers to keep them moving smoothly and to prevent them from freezing.
- Never store food in the tent, as there is a chance of animals tearing their way into the tent in order to get the food.
- Sweep out all refuse, and remove dirt with a damp cloth. After that allow the tent to dry completely before it is packed and stored.
- When the tent is wet, avoid pushing, pressing or contacting the tent material in any way.
- One should not use candles, matches, or open flames of any kind in or near a tent.
- When the tent is collapsed open up its doors and windows to allow air to escape.

### **Basic Tenting Rules:**

**1. Check your campsite before pitching your tent** - You're looking for two things; to make sure you're not placing your tent on top of rocks, roots or uneven ground that can cause damage to your tent and an uncomfortable night for you, and that the nice, flat, smooth area you find is not the lowest point on the campsite. Otherwise you could be flooded out in a storm when all the water runs downhill into your tent.

**2. Use a groundcloth** - this helps protect the exterior floor of the tent as well helping to prevent water from gathering under the floor. The best way to do that is to take a tarp or piece of 3 mil plastic sheeting and cut it just a little smaller than your tent's "footprint" so that the edges of the tent floor extend out slightly beyond the groundcloth's edges. If you don't make the groundcloth smaller, then water will gather on top of the groundcloth and then run in between the groundcloth and the exterior floor of the tent. Not a comfortable feeling in the middle of the night. If you ground cloth is larger, fold the edges under.

Also use a ground cloth inside the tent to avoid any moisture contacting your sleeping gear.

**3. Keep it clean - Inside.** Observe the Japanese custom of removing your footwear at the door to avoid tracking dirt and water inside the tent. If you can't or don't want to leave your shoes or boots outside the tent, use a plastic bag or the built-in pockets on most later model tents to store them inside. If you do get dirt or a stain inside, clean it up immediately to reduce the chance of further damage.

**4. Keep it clean - Outside.** There is almost no way to avoid getting dirt, stains, bird droppings, tree sap droppings and lots of other various things on the exterior of your tent. Always use clean water and a rag or sponge to clean up those stains or dirt as soon as possible.

**5. Make repairs as soon as you see the problem** - Duct tape is a tent's friend. You can use it to quickly patch a rip or tear and prevent it from getting worse, seal up split seams, fix broken support poles and many other repairs. The key is to make those repairs immediately, before they become unmanageable.

### **After Camp**

#### Tent Care

1. After each trip, set up your tent outside on a clear day and let it air out.
2. While it is up, wipe both the inside and outside thoroughly with a damp sponge.
3. Store your tent only after it is completely dry.
4. Store your tent in a cool, dry place out of sunlight. High temperatures may disrupt the coatings.

#### Pole Care

1. DO NOT allow the shockcord to snap the pole sections together, this can damage the poles.
2. Wipe poles with damp cloth to remove any dirt and saltwater, as saltwater can cause corrosion on the poles.
3. Store your poles only after they are completely dry. Store them in their own bags.

#### Zipper Care

1. Keep loose threads trimmed.
2. Keep free from dirt.
3. Spray periodically with a non-greasy, non-staining silicone spray designed for fabrics.
4. To prevent salt water corrosion on zipper pulls, make sure you rinse with clear water after exposure.

### **Cleaning the Tent**

- One should not wash the tent with hard detergents in a washing machine as this may damage the seams or the coating.
- The best way to clean up the tent is that one can set it up and wipe it down with a sponge and mild detergent or hand-wash it in cold water.
- When cleaning the entire tent, wash it with cold water, never use hot water, bleach, dishwashing liquid, pre-soaking solutions, or spot removers. Leave stubborn stains in place, and dust them with cornstarch or talcum powder to avoid its transfer to other parts of the tent in storage.
- Dry your tent by pitching it in the shade or by line drying only, machine dry is not recommended.
- **Mildew Cleaning Tips**  
A musty odor, and/or small cross-shaped spots on the tent fabric indicate mildew formation. This fungus actually penetrates the urethane coating of the tent fabric and grows between the tent fabric and coating, eventually lifting the coating from the fabric. Waterproofness is thus lost and the fabric is eventually destroyed.
- Should mildew begin to form, immediate action can be taken to retard further growth. Wash the tent as instructed above. Next, sponge-wipe the tent with a dilute solution of McNett MiraZyme or some other anti-fungal product. Sponge over the affected areas and allow to air dry, out of direct sunlight, without rinsing. This will kill the mildew on the tent, and prevent it from getting worse, but it will not remove the mildew marks. Or you can make a 5% solution of hydrogen peroxide. (125ml in 5 litres of water.) Sponge the solution on and, when the mould is gone, rinse off and wash the tent as directed above.

