



Media release
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Charge for breaching fire restrictions increased

Selwyn District Council voted recently to increase the charge payable if people breach fire restrictions and light unauthorised fires.

The minimum charge payable for unauthorised fires where local volunteer fire fighters attend callouts has increased from \$575 to \$1150. The money from the charge is provided to local volunteer fire brigades.

"The increased fee recognises the serious nature of lighting a fire during a restricted or prohibited fire season and also that people who ignore restrictions waste the time of volunteer fire fighters who need to be available to attend genuine emergencies," says Selwyn Principal Rural Fire Officer Douglas Marshall.

The charge can be applied in rural areas in a restricted or prohibited fire season if people breach fire restrictions or at other times of the year when fire safety guidelines are not followed.

Mr Marshall says that it is very important to have a policy in place which deters people from lighting fires in conditions when it is unsafe to do so. "Fires which are started when a prohibited fire season is in place and the fire risk is extreme put the community at risk. The increased charge sends a clear signal to people who flout the rules that this is unacceptable."

Mr Marshall says that where fire fighters respond to unnecessary callouts because people have lit fires when they are not allowed to or haven't followed fire safety guidelines, it is appropriate that the person who started the fire should pay for this cost.

If the cost of responding to the fire is higher than \$1150, a higher charge may be imposed to recover the actual cost of suppressing the fire.

Currently a prohibited fire season is in place across Selwyn District, which means that no outdoor fires can be lit except for gas barbeques.

Mr Marshall says that it is important that all property owners have insurance which covers fire damage, fire fighting and public liability insurance.

"Property owners who light fires when restrictions are in place will often say they didn't know about restrictions. Currently Selwyn is extremely dry and people need to exercise some common sense and not light fires in these conditions."

Mr Marshall says that people should also always check what fire restrictions are in place by visiting www.selwyn.govt.nz/fire or phoning the Council before considering lighting a fire.

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