



Media release

Thursday 22 December 2016

Fire restrictions introduced in Selwyn

A restricted fire season has been introduced in the rural plains of Selwyn district from 8am on Thursday 22 December.

“The fire risk in Selwyn has increased over recent weeks as weather conditions have become drier so it is now appropriate to introduce a restricted fire season to reduce the fire danger,” says Principal Rural Fire Officer Douglas Marshall.

Under a restricted fire season, only gas barbeques, crop residue and rubbish fires inside contained drums are allowed in rural areas of Selwyn. Any other fires can only be lit if a permit has been obtained from Selwyn District Council, but in the current dry conditions property owners should not expect to obtain a permit unless exceptional circumstances exist.

“Crop stubble fires are permitted in a restricted fire season but land owners need to be careful to ensure there is a fire break of ten clear metres around the edge of the fire to prevent it spreading,” Mr Marshall says.

He adds that property owners need to check the weather conditions and be careful to avoid burning on hot days or when strong winds are forecast. “We would also encourage people to avoid activities such as lawn mowing on hot nor’west days where there is a risk of a sparking igniting and starting a fire.”

A full list of fire safety guidelines which must be followed is available at www.selwyn.govt.nz/fire - if these conditions are not met, property owners can be liable for the costs of fire-fighting and damage from escaped fires.

Anyone breaching fire restrictions may potentially face a fine of \$1150 (\$1000 + GST) which is set by the Council, and applies even for a small fire.

“Over summer people may see crop residue fires burning. Fire services are often called out to attend rural fires that are being supervised and managed appropriately,” Mr Marshall says.

“It’s expensive and time consuming for volunteer fire fighters to attend false call outs so we encourage people to consider whether a fire is an emergency before they dial 111. If there are people on site supervising the fire, a fire break and water on hand it is probably a controlled operation – however if there is no one present people should report this by dialing 111.”

What’s allowed in a restricted fire season

In **residential areas** the only types of outdoor fire permitted throughout the year are barbeques or cooking fires. Other fires are prohibited or require a resource consent from Environment Canterbury. (For details see: www.ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/air-quality/outdoor-burning-rules/)

In **rural areas** in Selwyn in a restricted fire season the following rules apply:

- Gas barbeques are allowed if a water source is nearby. In residential areas gas barbeques are the only type of outdoor fire allowed unless a resource consent has been granted from Environment Canterbury for the fire
- Fires in drums must be covered with a wire mesh top sized no greater than 20mm or have a lid and flue with a spark arrester fitted. Only material that has had a minimum of at least a six week drying period may be burnt under Environment Canterbury's Air Plan. The only type of materials that may be burnt according to these rules is dried vegetation, paper, cardboard and untreated wood
- A water source must be nearby to extinguish the fire if needed and the fire may not be lit when strong winds are blowing or forecast
- The burning of crop residue is allowed but only during daylight hours and must be attended at all times. Fires may not be lit when strong winds are blowing or forecast, fire-fighting equipment and an adequate water source must be nearby and a 10 metre firebreak must be cleared around the edge of the area to be burnt. New requirements are also in place under Environment Canterbury's Air Plan which must be followed - a link is available on the Council website under www.selwyn.govt.nz/fire.
- Fire may be lit if a specific permit has been issued by Selwyn District Council and the conditions of the permit are followed

What's not allowed:

- Any type of fire not listed as permitted above – note that bonfires are not permitted
- Fire cannot be lit on Council reserves - including Coes and Chamberlains Fords and Whitecliffs Reserve

In the **high country and hill areas** of Selwyn, a restricted fire season is permanently in place.

ENDS

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