



Media Release

Wednesday 15 February 2017, 7.15pm

Port Hills/ Tai Tapu fire update: Residents should be prepared to evacuate

There have been significant changes in the status of the Port Hills/ Tai Tapu fires this afternoon largely as a result of the wind shifting to the north-east. The fires are within an estimated 1,655 hectare area – not all of this area is alight as the fire has been extinguished in some locations.

The Marley Hill fire has spread extensively down Worsley Spur, causing extensive vegetation burning in the Christchurch Adventure Park. The fire is approaching the residential area of Westmoreland.

Three houses have been destroyed on Hoon Hay Valley Road this afternoon.

The Early Valley Road fire area is also extending. One house has been destroyed on Old Tai Tapu Road.

People living in the areas close to the fires on Port Hills are advised they should be **prepared to evacuate at short notice.**

If you have concerns about your safety and want to leave, you should do so.

Evacuations are happening in the following areas:

- Worsley Road
- Hoon Hay Road - from Cashmere Road, and
- Kennedys Bush Road - from Cashmere Road.
- Dyers Pass Road has also been evacuated from Sign of the Takahe
- Early Valley Road

Approximately 300 people have been evacuated to date.

A welfare centre is open at Te Hapua Halswell Centre where people can receive assistance. Pioneer Recreation Centre is not operating as a welfare centre.

People are also being evacuated from Early Valley Road with a welfare base set up at Lincoln Events Centre. Ngāi Tahu has made available Nga Hau e Wha Marae (Pages Road) for people displaced by the fires.

Authorities are strongly advising people to stay away from the Port Hills area where emergency crews are working so they can focus on firefighting.

Authorities are extremely grateful for the many offers of assistance and donated goods for those affected by the fire. Currently no donated goods are needed and people's accommodation needs are being managed. Agencies are currently planning to establish a relief fund for affected by the fire.

Road Closures

Please stay well away from the area and off the roads – so that emergency services personnel can do their job and keep people safe.

- NEW: Cashmere Road is closed west of Kaiwara Street through to Kennedys Bush Road.
- Worsleys Road is closed
- Hoon Hay Valley Rd is closed
- Kennedys Bush Road is closed from the roundabout with Rock Hill Drive. This includes the southbound cycle track
- Worsleys Track from Worsleys Road is closed
- Dyers Pass Road is closed between Hackthorne Road to Governors Bay Road. Use the Lyttelton Tunnel or Gebbies Pass as the alternate route
- Summit Road is closed between Gebbies Pass and Rapaki Track
- Old Tai Tapu Road is closed between Osterholts Road and Early Valley Road
- Early Valley Road is closed
- Holmes Road is closed.

Power

Orion remains on full alert, ready to respond to any issues with power supply as a result of the fires continuing in the Port Hills.

The unpredictability of the fire and the course it may take poses some threat to continuity of power supply to the Port Hills and the greater city.

It is possible that there will be further outages until the fires are fully extinguished.

Orion urges residents in the Port Hills area to take particular care around electricity at this time.

The company is working closely with emergency services to co-ordinate its response to any developments and ensure its customers are kept up to date as soon as information is made available. For updates on outages around the city visit www.oriongroup.co.nz or call 03 363 9898 for more information.

Health Advice

Dr Alistair Humphrey, Canterbury Medical Officer of Health has advised that anyone suffering respiratory issues contact their GP in the first instance.

“For the vast majority of people, the smoke will be unpleasant, but carries no risk to their health. However, smoke may irritate the eyes, nose, throat and airways. More serious symptoms include runny or sore eyes, dry or sore throat, sore nose, cough, tightness of the chest or difficulty breathing.

“In healthy people, most symptoms disappear soon after exposure to smoke ends and do not cause long-term health problems.”

People who have difficulty breathing, have a prolonged cough or tightness in their chest should make their own GP team their first call.

“In an emergency always phone 111. For all other health care needs make your usual general practice team your first call – after hours, and when they’re closed, a team of nurses is ready to take your call. They can tell you what to do and where to go if you need to be seen urgently.”

Dr Humphrey says most people are very unlikely to have any long-term health effects but people with pre-existing respiratory (lung) illness or heart disease may experience and exacerbation (recurrence) of their condition.

Cigarette smokers, the elderly, children and those with heart disease, asthma or other lung disease are at greatest risk of harm from smoke inhalation.

“Avoid exposure where possible by staying indoors and closing windows and doors,” he says.

Ends

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