



Media release

Monday 14 March 2016

## **Prohibited Fire Season introduced**

A prohibited fire season has been declared in Selwyn district, effective from 8am Monday 14 March 2016.

Under the restrictions no outdoor fires can be lit in the district. The burning of crop stubble is also not allowed. Gas barbeques with a high pressure water source at hand are allowed but not charcoal barbeques. Fires are also not permitted in Council reserves. During a prohibited fire season all fire permits previously issued by the Council are also cancelled.

The district's Principal Rural Fire Officer Douglas Marshall says that vegetation in Selwyn District is now very dry and a prohibited fire season has been introduced to help ensure that the risk of fires breaking out is minimised.

"Selwyn has been experiencing several weeks of dry weather and in these conditions fires can easily ignite and spread quickly," he says.

Mr Marshall says that people need to be very vigilant in this weather to avoid any activities that could start a fire.

"We would discourage people from mowing the lawn or operating machinery during the heat of the day as sparks can easily ignite in the heat, and instead carry out these activities when it is cooler. Letting off fireworks is also not allowed in the current conditions."

"Property owners also need to be careful to ensure that any previously lit fires are fully extinguished and should check these sites carefully and if necessary douse the site with water or soil," he adds.

Mr Marshall says the Council will be reviewing the prohibited fire season status regularly and will lift restrictions as soon as it is considered safe to do so.

Property owners are reminded that a charge of \$1,150 is payable if people breach fire restrictions and light unauthorised fires plus all costs of any fire suppression that are incurred. The money from the charge is provided to local volunteer fire brigades.

### **Reducing fire risk**

You can help to reduce the fire risk, and make sure that fire services can quickly access your property to put out a fire if one does start, by:

- avoiding operating lawn mowers or other machinery during hot weather as sparks can easily ignite in these conditions, and waiting until the weather is cooler to mow lawns or operate machinery. If you do need to use machinery or a lawn mower, having a source of water nearby for fire firefighting is advisable as a precaution
- regularly checking and maintaining machinery and equipment so it is safe to operate

- disposing of ashes from an indoor fire safely in a metal container and use approved incinerators
- keeping a hose connected that can reach round the house
- storing firewood and other flammable materials away from the house
- keeping grass away from under hedges
- in rural areas keep a clear space between your house and buildings and vegetation like trees, shrubs and long grass to act as a fire break. Keep this space watered and green if possible or construct it from non- flammable material like paving stones.
- make sure your property number is easy to see and that it has a clear access way four metres wide and high so that fire services can easily access your property if needed

If you see a fire burning out of control, phone 111 immediately to report it.

Ends

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