



Media Release

Friday 25 January 2013

Prohibited Fire Season introduced

A prohibited fire season has been declared in Selwyn District, effective immediately.

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.

The district's Principal Rural Fire Officer Wilson Brown says that Selwyn has experienced a number of significant fires over the past weeks and a prohibited fire season has been introduced to help ensure that the risk of additional fires breaking out is minimised. Within the past weeks four significant fires have occurred in Selwyn District – the first on 10 January at Broadfield, followed by fires at Thompsons Road, Range Road and at the New Zealand Defence Force Rifle Range near West Melton.

“Our local volunteer fire crews, including the fire service, contractors and Council staff, have been extremely busy over the past weeks. We need to consider their health and safety and also the fact that they have to drop their own work commitments to carry out this important community service. We need to ensure that we do everything we can to allow them to rest and recover from recent fires so that they are ready for action when needed,” he says.

“We also need to give our community a clear message that the risk of fire is high and therefore a total fire ban is appropriate.”

“The hot and dry conditions affecting Selwyn currently mean that the fire risk is high. We recognise that restrictions on the ability of farmers to burn crop residue will be frustrating but our primary focus must be on reducing the fire risk in the district in order to protect lives and property. We also need to ensure that our local fire crews have the opportunity to have a break.”

Mr Brown 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.

During a prohibited fire season all fire permits previously issued by the Council are cancelled.

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:

- keeping the grass green, mown, or grazed around your home
- making sure your property number is easy to see
- keeping a hose connected that can reach round the house
- ensuring that your driveway has an access way which is at least four metres wide and high so that a fire engine can get in and out
- storing firewood and other flammable materials away from the house
- regularly check and maintain machinery and equipment so it is safe to operate
- disposing of ashes safely in a metal container and use approved incinerators
- keeping grass away from under hedges

Certain types of plants are more flammable than others. To find out more about planting less flammable species and reducing fire risk on your property visit www.selwyn.govt.nz/fire and select the 'fire safety' link.

Fire danger is one reason why you might need to leave your home in a hurry. All homes should have a household emergency plan with information on how you would leave your home quickly. You should also have emergency supplies. For more information about household emergency plans and supplies visit www.getthru.govt.nz.

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

ends

For more information contact:

Wilson Brown
Principal Rural Fire Officer
Selwyn District Council
027 490 1874

Allanah Jarman
Communications Advisor
Selwyn District Council
027 706 8804