



Media Release  
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## Are you prepared for fire?

"If a fire were to threaten your home, would you know what to do?"

As the fire risk in Selwyn rises with ongoing dry weather, that's a question every Selwyn homeowner needs to consider.

"Recent fires shows how unpredictable fires can be and how quickly they can spread in the right conditions," says Selwyn Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer Douglas Marshall.

"Currently the fire risk in Selwyn is very high, and on days with high winds or hot weather, or both, the fire risk becomes extreme," he says.

"It's important that every property owner, both in rural areas and in townships, knows what to do if a fire threatens their area. It's also important for property owners to consider what they can do now to reduce the chance of a fire damaging their home."

A prohibited fire season (total fire ban) is currently in place across Selwyn District. This means that no outdoor fires, fireworks, bonfires, hangis or charcoal barbecues are allowed.

"It is important that people don't light fires. Even if we do receive some rain the fire risk will remain very high as vegetation is extremely dry and rain is not a signal that people can light fires," says Mr Marshall.

He says the Council will seek to recover fire callout costs from anyone who breaches the fire restrictions. People can also be liable for the cost of fire damage. To date this year nine individuals have been billed for fire callout costs in Selwyn.

To help reduce the chances of a fire damaging your property you can take the following steps:

- Make preparations so your family is able to leave your property quickly. You can find advice and information on how to prepare a household emergency plan and an emergency kit online at [www.getthru.govt.nz](http://www.getthru.govt.nz)
- Check you have smoke alarms installed in your house and that these are working
- Check that any trees on your property are at least three metres away from power lines. Power lines touching trees can be a cause of fires in Selwyn. If you need advice on who can safely trim trees phone Orion on 0800 363 9898
- If you live in a rural area it is a good idea to create a clear space around your house to act as a fire break by clearing vegetation within 10 metres of buildings. Keep this area watered and green and remove trees, branches, shrubs and long grass. Do not store wood or other flammable materials inside this area
- Check you have a wide entrance to your property or paddocks which is at least four metres high and four metres wide to allow fire engines access in a fire

- If you have animals or stock consider what preparations you can make for them should a fire threaten your property
- Get to know your neighbours so that anyone who needs help leaving in a fire emergency can receive help, or if you need help to evacuate other people are aware of this and can help you
- Understand the fire risk. The fire risk is currently very high. On days with strong winds or hot weather or both of these factors, the fire risk rises to extreme.

If a fire occurs:

- Call 111 immediately to report a fire if you see one
- If you feel you could be at risk from a fire, leave your house with your family quickly. Do not wait to be told to leave as fires can move quickly and be unpredictable
- Never risk your life for a fire – if a fire gets out of control then leave fire-fighting to the experts

Selwyn District Council also recommends that every Selwyn household join Selwyn Gets Ready. People can register to join online at [www.selwyn.getsready.net](http://www.selwyn.getsready.net). Community Response Teams operate across Selwyn and the teams are made up of local civil defence volunteers. The information people provide through the website lets their local community response team know where people live and if people have any particular needs such as families with young children or households who don't have a car who will need assistance in an emergency. Selwyn Gets Ready can also be used to notify people if there is a threat they should be aware of.

Mr Marshall says that the system was recently used successfully to notify Castle Hill residents of a fire risk from the Flock Hill fire and the local Community Response Team then made plans to evacuate local residents. Fortunately the fire did not come close enough to require that the village be evacuated.

Ends

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