



Media Release
Friday 10 April 2015

Check fire safety rules before you light

Following a number of escaped vegetation fires over the past week Selwyn District Council is reminding people that they must follow safe burning practices and that fires are not permitted at night.

Currently an open fire season is in place in the rural areas of Selwyn district. In residential areas, outdoor burning is not permitting year round under Environment Canterbury air rules, with only gas barbeques permitted. In high country areas a restricted fire season remains in place permanently.

“We would like to remind people that even though rural areas in the plains are in an open fire season anyone who lights a fire is still responsible for all costs involved in fire suppression and damage should your fire get out of control or if it creates a danger or nuisance to others,” says Selwyn Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer Douglas Marshall.

“If you are lighting a fire we would also like to remind people that smoke is not permitted to drift over roads and that you may be liable if an accident occurs as a result of this.”

Mr Marshall is also encouraging property owners to check that their insurance covers fire suppression costs, and most importantly to have public liability insurance if a fire gets out of control and causes damage to your property or someone else's property.

Anyone lighting a fire in rural areas must meet general fire safety conditions:

- Check there are no restrictions in place
- Check the weather conditions are appropriate. Avoid burning when strong winds are blowing or are forecast as the fire can easily get out of control
- Position your burn in a site at least 10 metres clear of any other combustible material such as trees, buildings, stacked hay or anything else that is flammable
- Have adequate firebreaks of at least 3 metres (or more) surrounding the burn. If the burn is larger a bigger firebreak is required
- Fires may only be lit during daytime and should be out by dark
- Only organic material can be burnt under Environment Canterbury rules
- Supervise the fire at all times and have a means to control or extinguish the fire if it gets out of hand. This could include a garden hose or weedspray unit
- Let your neighbors know before you burn

You cannot:

- Light fires near combustible materials or in dry, windy conditions
- Burn plastics, tyres, treated wood, paint, appliances or chemicals
- Cause a smoke nuisance to neighbours
- Dispose of live ash – it can easily ignite and start fires.
- Light fires on reserves or coastal areas except for cooking fires in purpose built fireplaces or devices, or gas barbeques

If a fire is out of control please call 111 immediately with information on the location of the fire.

Mr Marshall says that while Selwyn has had some rain over recent weeks, if conditions in April become dry, fire restrictions could be re-imposed if necessary.

“Rural Fire Officers at the Council are here to help and can provide specialist advice. Please phone the Council on 347 2800 if you are unsure what rules are in place and would like advice,” he says.

Ends

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