



Media release

Wednesday 20 March 2013

Fire restrictions to ease in Selwyn

A restricted fire season will be introduced in Selwyn district from Friday 22 March.

Since 1 March a prohibited fire season has been in effect across the district, meaning that no fires could be lit except for gas barbeques, if there is a water source nearby.

Under a restricted fire season, only gas barbeques, crop residue and rubbish fires inside contained drums are allowed. There are a number of conditions which must be met before fires can be lit (see 'What's allowed in a restricted fire season' below). Any other fires can only be lit if a permit has been obtained from the Council.

The Council's Principal Rural Fire Officer, Wilson Brown, says that the rain the district received this week has reduced the fire risk, and it is now appropriate to move to a restricted fire season.

"If people are thinking of lighting a fire, they should always check what restrictions are in place by visiting the Council website, www.selwyn.govt.nz or phoning the Council," he says.

The Council recently introduced a new policy which allows a minimum \$500 (plus GST) charge to be imposed on people who light fires when a prohibited fire season is in place or who light fires when a restricted fire season is in place without observing fire safety guidelines.

"When a fire is permitted people need to be very careful to avoid lighting fires in strong winds, to make sure they have a water source which can put out the fire nearby and stay with the fire at all times," says Mr Brown.

Mr Brown says that crop residue fires are permitted during restricted fire seasons because farmers usually have good fire breaks of a minimum of 10 metres of bare earth in place which prevent fires from spreading, firefighting equipment on hand and stay with the fire while it is burning.

With fire restrictions being changed, Mr Brown says that it will become more common for people to see crop residue fires burning. "Fire services are often called out to attend rural fires that are being supervised and managed appropriately, "he says.

"It's expensive to attend false call outs so we encourage people to consider whether a fire is an emergency before they dial 111. If there are people on site supervising the fire, a fire break and water on hand it is probably a controlled operation – however if there is no one present people should report this by dialing 111."

Any future changes to fire restrictions will be posted online at www.selwyn.govt.nz .

What's allowed in a restricted fire season:

- Gas barbeques are allowed if a water source is nearby
- Fires inside properly constructed drums are allowed. Only vegetation, paper, cardboard and untreated wood can be burned and the fire must be during daylight hours and attended at all times. A water source must be nearby to extinguish the fire if needed and the fire may not be lit when strong winds are blowing or forecast
- The burning of crop residue is allowed but only during daylight hours and must be attended at all times. Fires may not be lit when strong winds are blowing or forecast, fire fighting equipment and an adequate water source must be nearby and a 10 metre firebreak must be cleared around the edge of the area to be burnt
- Fire may be lit if a specific permit has been issued by Selwyn District Council and the conditions of the permit are followed

What's not allowed:

- Any type of fire not listed as permitted above

Ends

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