

# Practical tips on Rural Fire Prevention

Your Canterbury and West Coast Rural Fire Authorities are working with you to protect our rural resources and communities. Fire prevention is the responsibility of us all. Rural fires can be particularly devastating, destroying our natural environment, ecosystems, farmland, forests, property and livelihoods. It's in all our interests to prevent rural fires. Wild fires can affect us all and many become large and costly due to late reporting and delayed initial response. To report any fire in a rural area, dial **111** immediately and give the location and any details. Prompt reporting is the key to preventing large fires developing. In many cases a commonsense approach can avoid disasters.

## How the rural fire system works

Fires in rural areas are the responsibility of the person who lights them. Fire control in rural areas is the responsibility of rural fire authority.

There are three types of rural fire authorities:

- Territorial authorities e.g. local councils
- Rural Fire Districts (e.g. NZ Defence, forestry companies or a combination of fire authorities)
- Department of Conservation

These rural fire authorities are mainly concerned with the control of vegetation fires. They also carry out fire prevention measures, monitor the fire danger, declare fire seasons and issue fire permits. This work is co-ordinated nationally through the National Rural Fire authority which also promotes fire training, research and co-operation in rural fire management.

The Northern South Island Regional Rural Fire Committee is the regional committee for all of Canterbury, West Coast, and Nelson/Marlborough. It is made up of representatives from local councils, the NZ Fire Service, NZ Defence, Department of Conservation, forest owners and Federated Farmers.

## Fire seasons and permits

Fire seasons are advertised by local rural fire authorities. They are responsible for issuing any permits and enforcing total fire bans. Even with a permit, the person lighting the fire is responsible and liable for any costs or damage. If in doubt, check with your local district council. Remember that campfires, barbecues and braziers are all classed as fires.



**Open fire season**  
Means no fire permit is needed to light a fire in the open air in rural areas.

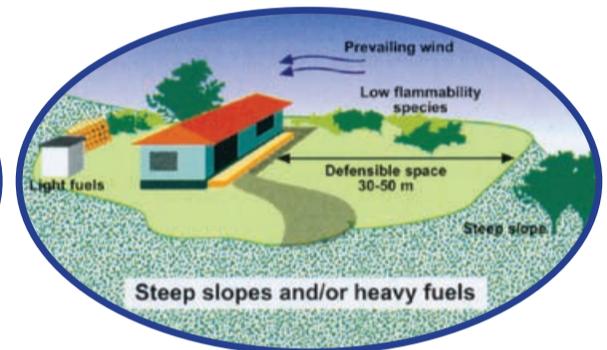
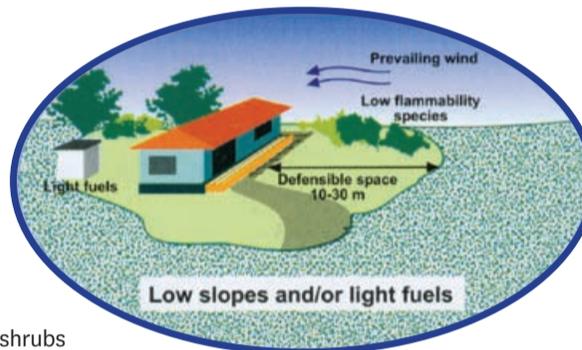
**Restricted fire season**  
Means a fire permit from the relevant rural fire authority is required to light a fire in the open air in rural areas.

**Prohibited fire season**  
Means a total fire ban and lighting of fires in the open air is not permitted.

## Around the home

Install smoke detectors.

- Maintain a defensible space around the house.
- Store firewood and flammable materials away from the house.
- Identify escape routes from the house.
- Keep grass areas mown and short and green where possible.
- Have defensible space or safety zone around your house and buildings. This involves removing flammable trees and scrub to create a green break with lawns or low flammability gardens and shrubs (see illustration right).



## On the farm or lifestyle block

- Be aware of the current fire danger.
- Obtain a fire permit, if required, and notify your fire authority of your intention to burn.
- Obey permit conditions when burning and note weather conditions and the forecast.
- Signpost your property clearly – know your rural property number, where available.
- Keep your rural property number by your telephone.
- Ensure emergency vehicles have clear, easy access to your house and sheds.
- Have adequate water supply for fire fighting with easy access.
- Keep firewood stacked away from the house and keep trees clear of powerlines.
- Maintain distances between sheds, (especially hay barns) vegetation and houses.
- Maintain machinery properly and use with care in dry conditions.
- Remember to check machinery for birds nests.
- Carry fire extinguishers.
- Store fuel and chemicals safely and keep them isolated from other materials.
- Dispose of ash safely in a metal container and use approved incinerators.
- Be especially careful with mowers, hay-making equipment and chainsaws.
- Keep trees clear of power lines
- Carry adequate fire insurance.

## On holiday

Trampers, hunters, fishers and other holiday makers are asked to take care with fire and gas cookers this summer. Uncontrolled fires can devastate natural areas, which may never fully recover.

A year round restricted fire season applies to all conservation lands and within one kilometre of these areas.

Backcountry users should be self-sufficient, carrying personal cooking equipment. Cookers should be operated in a well-ventilated area and well clear of vegetation that could easily catch alight.

- Observe fire restrictions and be aware of the fire danger.
- Campfires, barbecues and braziers are open fires and may be restricted or banned depending on conditions.
- Gas barbecues are a safer alternative to open fires.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- If fires are allowed, make sure any ashes are doused with water and disposed of safely.
- Take care with cigarettes.

## Who pays for fires in rural areas?

The costs of fighting fires in rural areas can be passed onto the landowner or the person who caused the fire, even if they have obtained a fire permit.

It is the responsibility of the local rural fire authority to decide on cost recovery action.

The costs of fighting fires in rural areas passed on to the individual responsible have run into the \$100,000's. It is important that all landowners assess the risk of a fire starting on their land and consider – as well as fire insurance on property and plant having both fire fighting insurance and public liability cover.

Accidental fires can occur and it is prudent for rural landowners to have adequate insurance cover.

# Protect what you value

**Fires cost lives and destroy property and you may be held responsible!**

**For RURAL FIRE EMERGENCY RING 111**

## CANTERBURY WILL BE DRY THIS SUMMER!!

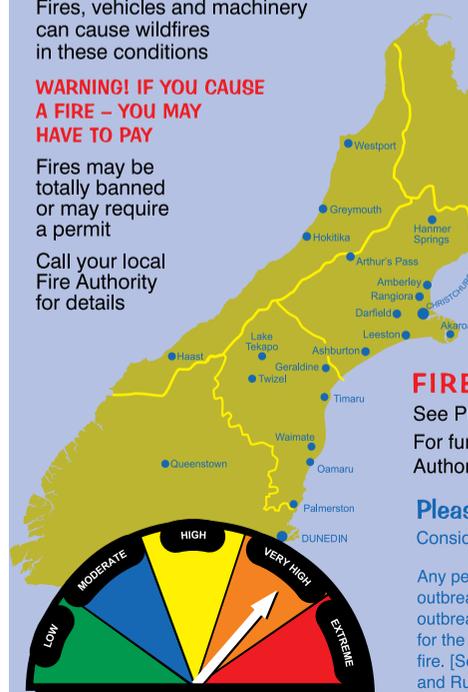
Very high to extreme fire dangers are predicted

Fires, vehicles and machinery can cause wildfires in these conditions

## WARNING! IF YOU CAUSE A FIRE – YOU MAY HAVE TO PAY

Fires may be totally banned or may require a permit

Call your local Fire Authority for details



## FIRE AUTHORITY CONTACT NOS.

Ashburton District Council	(03) 307 7700
Ashley Rural Fire District	(03) 310 7612
Environment Canterbury	(03) 365 3828
Christchurch City Council	(03) 941 8999
Department of Conservation	(03) 371 3700
Hurunui District Council	(03) 314 8816
New Zealand Army: Firemaster Burnham Camp	(03) 363 0067
Selwyn District Council	(03) 347 2800
Waimakariri District Council	(03) 311 8004
West Coast Rural Fire Authority	(03) 768 0313
South Canterbury Rural Fire District	(03) 687 7200

## FIRE DANGER REPORTS

See Public Notices for restricted fire season dates

For further information see National Rural Fire Authority website – [www.ruralfire.org.nz](http://www.ruralfire.org.nz)

## Please remember:

Consider your actions and the effect they may have on others

Any person who causes an outbreak or threat of fire may be liable for the costs of fighting that fire. [Section 43 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977]

Any person who lights a fire during a restricted or prohibited fire season may be committing an offence against [Section 23 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977]