



Fire Danger Notice 16 of 2018
Issue date: 16 JULY 2018 @ 1200hrs

Forest Fire Danger Rating



Condition Orange – High Fire Risk

Warning Effective From 1200hrs 16/07/2018
Effective Period Expires 1200hrs 20/07/2018

Arising from preceding drought conditions, a High Fire Risk is deemed to exist in all areas where hazardous fuels exist. Previous Extreme Fire Risk condition is now likely to be moderated on a localised basis by scattered light rain, cooler temperatures and higher ambient humidity levels in many areas. However, an increase in fire risk values is very likely as the week progresses.

Highest ignition risks are likely to remain in public amenity areas in proximity to urban centres. Vigilance is also required in relation to open land at risk from illegal burning of waste and other ignition sources. High levels of fuels curing arising during the recent drought spell and persistent high Soil Moisture Deficits means that a protracted high fire risk is likely to persist in many areas, pending significant rainfall.



Fire Weather Data Courtesy of European Commission Copernicus System, European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting and Met Eireann.

Pending significant change in meteorological conditions, this risk condition will remain in place until 1200hrs on Friday, July 20, 2018 unless otherwise stated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

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Fire Weather Index Values

Fine Fuel Moisture Code values (FFMC) have remained above **80** in Leinster and are expected to remain above this key threshold through the week, indicating ready flammability and ease of ignition in dead vegetation as the week progresses. Recent light rain in some areas may reduce this value at a localised level and on this basis the current Risk Condition is being downgraded to Condition Orange.

Soil Moisture deficits are now above **90** in several eastern areas, indicating continued reduced water availability to vegetation on all soil types, particularly shallow rooting vegetation, and lower live fuel moisture contents in key high fire risk vegetation types. These deficits and effects are likely to be significantly higher on peat soils and on well-drained soil types. Current Soil Moisture Deficits can be expected to continue to increase steadily in the absence of significant rainfall, and advanced grass curing is now evident in many areas as a consequence of this.

Drought Code (DC) remains at a highly elevated level above **350** and increasing daily indicating difficult and extensive mop up requirements of smouldering material, increased availability of larger diameter fuels, and an elevated risk of sub-surface fires in peats and organic soil layers. Increased attention and effort will be required to achieve complete mop-up of smouldering material following fires on this basis.

Projected **Initial Spread Index (ISI)** values have reduced slightly to below **4** in response to cooler air temperatures and increased humidity, but still indicate a **potential for fire spread in shrub fuel types**, particularly where localised wind conditions permit. Reduction in ISI values is further augmented by reductions in **Build Up Index (BUI)** values, which relate to the availability of larger diameter materials such as logs as fuels. Values above 60 are considered extreme and at this point indicated value is now below this threshold, but is likely to gradually increase again in coming days.

Windspeeds in excess of 20km/h are not expected during the lifespan of this notice.

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Advice to Forest Owners and Managers

All forest owners and managers are again advised to prepare for likely outbreaks of fire. Recent weeks have seen significant fire activity and losses in forestry. Fire lines, Fire Plans, fire suppression equipment should be reviewed and made ready and other relevant contingencies such as insurance, helicopter contracts etc., checked and confirmed.

The need for increased vigilance at this time cannot be overstated. Forest owners, farmers, rural dwellers and other countryside users are asked to be extremely vigilant regarding fire activity, to report any suspicious or illegal activity to the Gardai and to report all fires immediately to the Fire and Emergency Services via 112/999.

The Department recommends that forest owners and managers should consider the fire mitigation measures that they can put in place to help prevent loss or damage to forest resources through fire. Examples of such measures are:

1. Risk assessment:

Assess your property with regard to fire risk and mitigation factors. Is there a risk of fire or presence of hazardous fuel vegetation on neighbouring lands? Is there a history of land burning in the vicinity of your forest? Are access routes adequate, accessible and clear of obstructions? Is there a firebreak in place and has it been adequately maintained?

2. Prepare:

Fire Plans should be developed for all forests, including a map showing access routes and assembly points for fire fighting personnel and equipment and potential sources of water. The plan should also include contact details for the emergency services, local private and Coillte foresters, neighbouring landowners and forest owners in order to summon help should the need arise.

Have fire-fighting tools such as beaters and knapsack sprayers to hand and ready to use. If you do not live in reasonable proximity to your woodland, a local caretaker or forest neighbour should be employed and should also have a copy of the fire plan with your and all the above contact numbers.

Clear tracks and roads if available and ensure forest entrances and access routes are not blocked by parked vehicles or other obstacles, especially where visitors or recreational users may be present. Suitable signage to this effect should be displayed on gates or barriers.

Firebreaks should be created (if not already in place) by screefing or removing vegetation mechanically by excavator so that the soil is bare. Fire breaks should be at least 6 metres wide and should be maintained clear of flammable vegetation.

3. Be Vigilant:

Forest owners should be particularly vigilant during the high risk period. Fire patrols may be warranted in known fire hotspots. Be particularly vigilant at Bank Holiday weekends where high risk weather is forecast. Cooperation between neighbouring landowners is critical to successful fire prevention. Forest owners should discuss their concerns about fire with neighbouring landowners in advance of the fire season. Providing assistance to farmers wishing to carry out legal prescribed burning earlier in the season is a useful way of developing good working relationships with neighbours, as well as ensuring that operations are conducted safely during lower risk conditions. Forest owners should cooperate with fire planning and share the burden of fire patrols and vigilance during high risk periods.

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4. Obey the Law:

It is an offence to cut, grub, burn or otherwise destroy any vegetation growing on any land not then cultivated between 1st March and 31st August in any year. Report all suspicious or illegal activity to Gardai immediately. Landowners wishing to carry out legally permitted prescribed burning must notify in writing all forest owners within one mile of the wood, and the local Garda station, between 7 and 35 days in advance of the burning operation. All burning operations should be notified to the Fire Service, via the control centre by telephoning 112/999 BEFORE burning commences. Landowners found burning illegally could face fines, imprisonment and Single Farm Payment penalties, where applicable.

5. Report Fires Immediately:

If you see a fire, do not delay; report it to the Fire and Emergency Services straight away. Do not wait for somebody else to make the call. Dial 999 or 112. **You will not be billed by the fire service or local authority for making the call.** Give clear details as regards location, where at all possible using a national grid reference and any other useful information such as the size of the fire, wind direction, proximity to dwellings or forestry etc. Do not attempt to tackle fires alone or without adequate training or protective equipment.

6. Report Losses:

If your forest is damaged or destroyed, report this loss as soon as possible to your local Gardai station and to the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford.**

Advice to the General Public/Forest Visitors

Members of the public and visitors to recreational areas should cooperate with all requests regarding fire safety, obey all relevant bye-laws and be considerate in parking vehicles so as not to impede access by emergency vehicles.

Where fire outbreaks occur at or near recreational areas the following actions should be taken by visitors in the interests of safety.

1. Do not light fires in and around forests or open land.
2. Do not attempt to intervene or fight fires under any circumstances.
3. Gather all family/group members and move to a safe fuel-free location such as a car park, upwind of the fire.
4. Telephone Fire and Rescue Services via 112 and report the fire and its location.
5. Evacuate if instructed to do so, and cooperate with all Emergency Service Instructions.

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests-service/firemanagement/>

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