

Burning Questions for Farmers!

Burning Land or Vegetation is Extremely Dangerous!

Controlled burning of land or vegetation requires expert skill and a rigorous fire plan needs to be in place. Before YOU consider setting a controlled fire, carefully consider the following questions:

1. Is a fire ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY?
2. Am I WITHIN THE LEGALLY PERMITTED PERIOD for controlled burning
3. Am I WITHIN 1 MILE OF A WOODLAND OR FOREST?
4. Is MY FIRE PLAN thoroughly prepared?
5. Am I certain that my property and my neighbour's property will be SAFE?
6. Have I NOTIFIED MY NEIGHBOURS and the OWNERS OF NEARBY PLANTATIONS the GARDA SIOCHANA, the LOCAL AUTHORITY and the FIRE SERVICE Regional Control Centre?
7. Have I SUFFICIENT HELP AND EQUIPMENT on standby to control the planned fire?
8. Am I sure that I have ADEQUATE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION with others should an emergency arise?
9. Have I considered the FINANCIAL & INSURANCE CONSEQUENCES of an uncontrolled fire?
10. If I light an uncontrolled fire, have I fully considered the penalties under the Department's Direct Payment Schemes, the possibility of facing prosecution fines of up to €50,000, up to 2 years in prison OR BOTH?

Warning!

Don't risk **YOUR** own and **YOUR** neighbours' **Lives, Livelihoods, Homes, Forests and Property**. Before you strike a match, ask yourself The Burning Question:

**IF I START A FIRE CAN I STOP IT?
IF IN ANY DOUBT, DO NOT BURN!**

To find out more, visit www.agriculture.gov.ie

Forest Fires

<p><i>Fires</i> rarely, if ever, occur spontaneously in Irish forest conditions. They are usually the result of either unforeseen or careless actions,</p> <p>Vulnerable stage of forest growth Forests are vulnerable throughout the rotation but the most vulnerable stage of forest growth is before the forest closes canopy. During that time the forest accumulates successive seasons' growth of vegetation which, when dry, is highly inflammable. Forests adjoining lands with flammable vegetation such as moorland vegetation, bracken and furze are most vulnerable.</p> <p>Vulnerable season Fires can occur throughout the year but the risk is greatest during dry spells from March to June when ground vegetation is dormant and dry. The risk increases with decreasing humidity and increasing wind speed. Furze will burn readily in all seasons. Fire risk increases with the presence of people who are likely to be careless with fire and who do not appreciate the flammability of vegetation.</p> <p>Prevention Prevention includes measures to: (a) Raise awareness so that people are not careless while in the vicinity of the forest: (b) Ensure vigilance to detect a fire before it becomes a serious threat: (c) Slow down the rate of progress of any fire which is likely to become a threat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest access is vital for fire prevention and control. • Install firebreaks or zones of lower flammability around and within a forest. • Develop a fire plan to ensure that a fire is extinguished quickly and safely. </p> <p>Fire plan The fire plan consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fire plan map - scale 1:10,560 or 1:10,000 (i.e. a 6 inch map or metric equivalent). • A location map - scale 1:50,000 (i.e. Discovery Series Map). • A note showing the location of necessary equipment, of site features and of contact details of people who can be called upon to help if a fire occurs. <p>It is advisable to liaise annually with the local Fire Brigade and to give it a copy of the fire plan . The fire plan map shows the location of the forest as well as features such as firebreaks, access routes (by foot as well as by vehicles) and sources of water. For safety reasons it is important to show any hazards such as swamps and ravines. It is most likely that people who have little knowledge of the terrain in the forest and adjoining lands will be involved in fire fighting. They may have to contend with darkness or low visibility due to smoke</p> </p>	<p>Water Water may be needed to dampen down sod fences and vegetation during and after a fire and provision should be made to have a knapsack sprayer, buckets or a pump available. A slurry tank is a good water carrier. Water supply for a fire tender needs to be beside a road suitable for vehicular traffic. Water supply for a helicopter should be a lake with a helicopter run either way unrestricted by hills, terrain difficulties, power, telephone and other cables or trees. There should be a minimum water depth of 2 metres at the water collecting point. If a lake or other aquatic zone is to be used as a water reservoir prior approval should be obtained from the Regional Fisheries Board and, if it is a source of potable water, from the Local Authority.</p> <p>Fire beaters Fire in moorland vegetation is usually extinguished most effectively using fire beaters. These may be implements such as shovels or purpose made from rectangles of conveyor belting (approximately 0.3 metres by 0.4 metres) bolted onto handles 2 metres or so long.</p> <p>Refreshments Fire fighting is demanding and tiring work. It is important to make provision for substitution of people engaged in fire fighting and to have refreshments available during and after the fire.</p> <p>Forest access Forest access is vital for fire prevention and control. A fire can spread very rapidly during the period of high fire risk so the more quickly people can reach it in safety the faster it can be extinguished. Access is also important as it provides an escape route if the fire becomes a danger to health or safety.</p> <p>Firebreaks (also known as fire lines) Firebreaks are very effective in slowing down the rate of progress of a fire. In addition they allow for more speedy access within and around the forest so that fire fighters can reach the location of the fire more quickly</p> <p>Firebreaks (also known as fire lines) are formed by: (a) Screefing; (b) Brushing bands of trees; (c) Planting bands of larch;</p> <p>(a) Screefing or removing vegetation so that the underlying soil is bare is normally carried out mechanically with an excavator or a blade. Such a fire line should be at least 6 metres wide and, normally, it should be made during afforestation of lands that adjoin uncultivated or non- intensively grazed farmland. If not made then it may be made at a later time. This type of fire line may require renewal or maintenance so that it remains free of high fire risk vegetation. Spoil from the screening should be placed on the internal side of the firebreak. It is important that the firebreak is smooth and firm and does not</p>	<p>present obstacles or hazards to any walking or running that may be necessary in the event of a fire outbreak. Larger forest areas of 100 hectares or more should have internal firebreaks. Roads, rivers or other fuel free zones also fulfil the functions of a firebreak.</p> <p>Most fires spread from adjoining lands into forests and for that reason firebreaks are most often on the forest boundary. However they are an intensive form of soil disturbance so it is important to depart from the boundary when they are constructed if archaeological, water quality, biodiversity or other issues arise.</p> <p>In these instances the appropriate buffer zones and exclusion zones must be observed and the firebreak must be made the required distance back from the relevant features. Landscape considerations may also dictate that part or all of the firebreak should depart from the forest boundary and be made inside the forest.</p> <p>(b) Brushing of 10 metre wide bands of trees so that the lower branches are completely removed up to 2 metres high - the cut branches should be removed into the forest.</p> <p>(c) Planting 20 metre wide belts of trees, such as larch, that can establish quickly and provide less fuel than, say, spruce or pine.</p> <p>After the fire It is a wise precaution to arrange for the site to be kept under surveillance for a day or more after the fire is extinguished. The vegetation and soil as well as earth banks may continue to smoulder and be the source of another outbreak. They should be damped with water. Warm clothing is often needed when the exertions of fire fighting are finished and these should be on site if people are required to remain on fire watch duty. Ensure that there is an account of everyone who was engaged in fire fighting or who visited the site and that they left the site safely.</p>
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