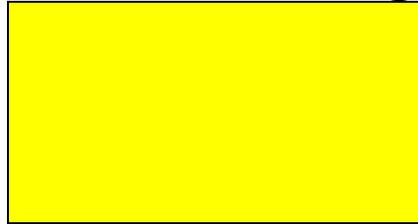


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Forest Fire Risk Warning



Condition Yellow – Moderate Fire Risk Be Aware

Given recent dry weather patterns and the impacts of this weather on the flammability of fine fuels such as grasses, gorse, and heather in both upland and lowland areas, a Moderate Fire Risk (Condition Yellow) is deemed to exist in all areas where such hazardous fuels are present in proximity to forests and other assets.

This condition will remain the minimum default status until the end of the main peak fire season in September unless otherwise upgraded by Forest Service. Forest owners and managers should be aware of the inherent high fire risk during this period.

All forest owners and managers are advised to check and update fire plans and other relevant contingencies such as insurance, helicopter contracts etc.

Forest owners, farmers, rural dwellers and other countryside users are asked to be vigilant, to report any suspicious activity to the Gardai and to report any uncontrolled or unattended fires immediately to the Fire and Emergency Services.

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 the 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 the plan to hand throughout the fire season.

BE PREPARED. BE VIGILANT. STAMP OUT FOREST FIRES

Have fire-fighting tools such as beaters and knapsack sprayers to hand, tested 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 details and all the above contact numbers.

Clear tracks and roads if necessary 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 screening 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 following prolonged dry spells. Less than 24 hours is sufficient to dry dead moorland vegetation following rain, where windy conditions exist. Cooperation between neighbouring landowners is critical to successful fire prevention. Forest owners should discuss their concerns about fire with local 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. Forest owners should cooperate with fire planning and share the burden of fire patrols and vigilance.

See http://www.teagasc.ie/forestry/docs/met_eireann/fire_index_forecast.html for the latest fire weather index, and <http://www.teagasc.ie/forestry/> for current Forest fire risk condition.

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 day of March and 31st day of August in any year. Report suspicious or illegal activity to Gardai immediately. Landowners wishing to carry out prescribed burning during the legal period for doing so, must notify in writing all Forest owners within one mile, 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**.

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. **You will not be billed by the fire service or local authority for making the call.** Do not attempt to tackle fires alone or without adequate training or protective equipment.

6. Report all losses.

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

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