



**Fire Danger Notice 18 of 2018**  
Issue date: 25 JULY 2018 @ 1200hrs

## Forest Fire Danger Rating



### Condition Orange – High Fire Risk

**Warning Effective From 1200hrs 25/07/2018**  
**Effective Period Expires 1200hrs 30/07/2018**

Arising from preceding drought conditions, a High Fire Risk remains in all areas where hazardous fine fuels such as gorse, heather, dried grasses and other dead vegetation exist. Fire risk condition is likely to be moderated on a localised basis by scattered light rain, and higher ambient humidity levels in many areas. However, a short term increase in fire risk values is likely on Thursday, 26/07/2018.

Highest ignition risks 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 accidental ignition sources arising from recreational and agricultural activities. A protracted, on-going fire risk is likely due to desiccation and curing of fine fuels arising from recent drought conditions. These fuels can regain flammability in a short time following light rain. Extreme caution is particularly required where cured shrub fuels like gorse are concerned.



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

Pending significant rainfall, this risk condition will remain in place until 1200hrs on Monday, July 30, 2018 unless otherwise stated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

**BE PREPARED. BE VIGILANT. STAMP OUT FOREST FIRES.**



## Fire Weather Index Values

**Fine Fuel Moisture Code values (FFMC)** are now between **70** and **80** across most of Ireland at this point, indicating reduced flammability levels in grasses and other fine fuels. Recent light rain in some areas may reduce this value further at a localised level and the level will drop below **50** in many areas during the lifespan of this notice. Fine fuels can recover flammability rapidly after rain events, particularly in higher temperatures. Given the availability of desiccated and cured grasses at this point, a high level of vigilance is required in relation to fire and the Condition Orange Risk stands on this basis.

**Soil Moisture Deficits** remain well above **80** in most 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. Advanced grass curing and mortality in other key fine fuel types is now evident in many areas as a consequence of recent drought and will continue to drive fire risk in coming months.

**Drought Code (DC)** remains at a highly elevated level above **450** in eastern areas and increasing daily indicating difficult and extensive mop-up (full extinguishment of smouldering material and residual smoke), increased availability of larger diameter fuels, and an elevated risk of sub-surface fires in peats and organic soil layers where fires occur. 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)** remains at nominal levels below **3** with a temporary spike predicted on July 26<sup>th</sup> in response to increased forecast wind speeds. These wind speeds may exceed the critical 30km/h threshold for fire behaviour, and may reach near gale force speeds at some locations. Extreme caution is advised where fires occur under these conditions.

**Build Up Index (BUI)** values will remain between 60-75, indicating availability of larger diameter materials such as logs as fuel.

**Windspeeds** in excess of 30km/h may arise at some coastal locations 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 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> 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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