

Fires

Burning land or vegetation is extremely dangerous. Wildfires are generally the result of either unforeseen or careless actions.

Vulnerable season

Gorse will burn readily in all seasons and although fires occur throughout the year, 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. Most people significantly underestimate the intense flammability of vegetation and the speed at which a relatively small fire can become out of control. Fire risk substantially increases with the presence of people who are untrained, ill prepared, uninformed, or inexperienced in managing a controlled fire.

It is an offence under Section 40 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 (amended by Section 46 of the Wildlife Act, 2000) to burn, from 1st March to 31st August in any year, any vegetation growing on any land not then cultivated.

Controlled burning of land or vegetation requires expert skill and should only be attempted by experienced persons and in accordance with a meticulously prepared fireplan. However, before you even consider setting a controlled fire you must answer YES to ALL the following questions.

- Is a fire **ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY**?
- **IF I START A FIRE CAN I STOP IT?**
- Am I **WITHIN THE LEGALLY PERMITTED PERIOD** for controlled burning?
- Am I **WITHIN 1 MILE OF A WOODLAND OR FOREST?**
- Is **MY FIRE PLAN** thoroughly prepared?
- Am I certain that my property and my neighbour's property will be **SAFE?**
- Have I **NOTIFIED MY NEIGHBOURS** and the **OWNERS OF NEARBY FORESTRY PLANTATIONS** or **WOODLANDS?**
- Have I notified the **GARDA SIOCHANA**, the **LOCAL AUTHORITY** and the **FIRE SERVICE Regional Control Centre?**
- Have I **SUFFICIENT HELP AND EQUIPMENT** on standby to control the planned fire?
- Am I sure that I have **ADEQUATE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION** with others should an emergency arise?

- Have I considered the FINANCIAL & INSURANCE CONSEQUENCES of an uncontrolled fire including the loss of my Single Farm Payment?
- If I light an uncontrolled fire, have I 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?

IF YOU ANSWER **NO** TO ANY OF THE ABOVE OR HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT ANY OF THESE ANSWERS THE ADVICE IS SIMPLE. **DO NOT BURN!**

Fire Plan

If you intend to set a controlled fire you must, in advance, thoroughly prepare a fireplan that will ensure that the fire can be controlled properly and extinguished quickly and safely. A thorough fire plan must include consultation with neighbouring landowners and with other interested parties and agencies such as your local Gardai, your Local Authority and the Regional Fire Service Control Centre for your county.

You should never set a controlled fire on your own. Even the smallest of fires will require a minimum of three responsible adults to be in attendance, all of whom are experienced with controlled burning and familiar with the fireplan.

What to do if you see a fire

- Find out the location of the fire;
- Assume that the fire will become more dangerous if it is not extinguished at a very early stage.
- Ascertain its direction and speed of spread and, if possible, the risk to any people or property in its path.
- Decide on the need to summon help and the Fire Brigade.
- Speed of response is vital so do not assume that someone else will make that call. If in doubt call out the Fire Brigade and summon help. Don't wait for someone else to do it!
- The speed of your response could be the determining factor in saving someone's life.

Calling the Fire Brigade

If you are calling out the Fire Brigade, be prepared to give the most accurate information available to you about the location of the fire, including the townland and the best access point from the public road. Arrange to meet the tender at an assembly point.

All requests for assistance are directed via the 999 or 112 emergency numbers, to the Regional Control Centre (RCC). The RCC uses a predetermined response system to alert the nearest brigade to any incident.

When you are making an emergency call and dialing 999 or 112 the operator will ask you:

- What service do you require? Fire, Ambulance or Gardai.
- If you require the Fire Service, you will be connected to another operator who will identify himself or herself by saying 'Regional Fire Control.'
- Speak calmly and clearly giving the address of the fire and your 'phone number.
- Only hang up when the operator tells you to.

The operator will advise when appropriate assistance has been ordered.

If the emergency deteriorates after you have ended the call, you should dial 999 or 112 again, for further assistance.