



# Practical guide to rural fire

Put fire safety into your plan



# Planning can save your rural property

- ▶ **There aren't many business** that are your home and way of life.
- ▶ **Rural property owners** must cope with things beyond their control such as weather and commodity prices.
- ▶ **Business success** is a tribute to rural property owners ability to manage the risks.
- ▶ **Rural property and business owners** need to be alert to the fire danger and the fire risk inside and outside their buildings and include fire protection in their plans.
- ▶ **Fire can cause financial and material losses** to you, your family and your business.



## Lighting fire in rural areas

Know the fire season in your region, there are three fire seasons you should be aware of:

- ▶ **Open** – no fire permit is needed to light a fire in the open air.
- ▶ **Restricted** – a fire permit is required to light a fire in the open air.
- ▶ **Prohibited** – means a ban on the lighting of any fires in the open air.

## Fire has the potential

to cause losses of which the consequences can be disastrous.

# Protecting your assets



**Rural property owners face a higher risk from fire than their urban counterparts. The consequences are greater because fires are detected later and the emergency response takes longer.**

**You need to have a higher level of fire safety awareness and to take extra precautions in rural areas.**



## FACT:

Kitchen fires are the number one cause of fires in the home.



### Risk of fire inside your home

Most fire deaths occur in the home. Follow these basic fire-safety measures and be fire wise around your home.

- ▶ **Install smoke alarms** and have identified escape plans. Carry out evacuation drills.
- ▶ **Install appropriate fire extinguishers** e.g. Dry Powder for house and machinery and make sure they are working.
- ▶ **If you are constructing a new home** or modifying an existing home or building, consider installing a sprinkler system.



## Install smoke alarms

and have identified escape plans.

- ▶ **Kitchen fires are the number one cause of fires** in the home so “keep looking while you’re cooking”.
- ▶ **Don’t overload extension cords**, multi boxes or power points e.g. only one plug per socket.
- ▶ **Don’t let rubbish and junk accumulate.** Clean out roof spaces, basements, cupboards, garages and storage regularly.
- ▶ **Keep combustible materials** i.e. drying clothes, papers or wood at least one meter from any heater or fire.
- ▶ **Clean the chimney** at least once a year.
- ▶ **Do a fire safety check** at night before you go to bed.



## Risk to your property from vegetation fire

You cannot change the weather or the topography but you can modify the fuel:

- ▶ **Create a safety zone** or defensible space around your buildings by clearing dead and cured fuels out to 10 metres.
- ▶ **Establish lawns and paths** and get rid of flammable vegetation or convert to less flammable species.



## FACTS:



The risk of a vegetation fire starting and doing damage on any given day depends on the weather and dryness of the fuel and topography in which the fire is burning.

- ▶ **Keep your lawn mown** and watered.
- ▶ **Clear leaves and twigs** from gutters and decks.
- ▶ **Do not stack firewood closer** than 10 metres from structures.
- ▶ **If allowed use approved incinerators** and discard ash from home fires into metal containers.
- ▶ **Keep a garden hose connected** that is long enough to reach around the buildings.

## FACT:

Good planning, good maintenance and good housekeeping are the keys to protecting your buildings and machinery.

### Rural buildings and machinery

- ▶ **Store petrol, diesel fuels and chemicals** in clearly labelled approved containers and in single purpose locations away from other buildings.
- ▶ **Keep areas clean of rubbish**, oily rags, firewood and other fuel sources.
- ▶ **Fit suitable fire extinguishers** in buildings and on machinery.
- ▶ **Check all machinery is free of mechanical defects** that could start a fire and has an approved exhaust system and spark arrester.
- ▶ **Clean all machinery regularly** to ensure belly pans and spaces around motors are free of oil, dust, grease, grass and straw.



- ▶ **Get rid of starlings' nests** from around motors and other high risk areas.
- ▶ **Keep areas around rural buildings** and yards well grazed or mown to reduce the fire hazard.
- ▶ **Do welding and angle grinding only on clear areas.** Wet down and have fire equipment handy.

## Keep trees and branches

at least 3 metres clear of power lines.

“ Fires start in fine dry fuels.”

# Rural Fire Authorities



**Rural Fire Authorities are primarily concerned with the control of vegetation fires. They are also responsible for fire prevention activities and as such monitor the daily fire danger, declare fire seasons and issue fire permits.**



Rural Fire Authorities are:

- ▶ **The Department of Conservation** for State areas.
- ▶ **NZ Defence Force** for its own land.
- ▶ **Rural Fire District Committee** for specially gazetted areas.
- ▶ **Territorial Authorities** for areas that fall outside the above.

## If in doubt

ring your Local Council  
or the Department of  
Conservation.

# Lighting fires in the open air



**Fires are a legitimate land management tool. However, if you want to light a fire in the open air, check with your Rural Fire Authority to see if you need a fire permit or if there is a fire ban operating. Don't start a fire you cannot stop.**



- ▶ **If you need a permit,** do your burning according to your permit conditions.
- ▶ **If you don't need a permit,** do your burning during a period of light winds and when no strong winds are forecast.
- ▶ **Clear at least 3 metres** around the area to be burnt to prevent the fire spreading.
- ▶ **Supervise all open air fires** until they are completely out.


## Any person

causing a vegetation fire requiring fire suppression action can be charged for the cost of fire suppression.

# Rural operations







Rural property owners should be very careful when using machinery during extreme fire danger periods. Fires can start from the smallest spark.

- ▶ **Fires can start by sparks** when slashers or mowers hit stones or wire.
- ▶ **Pay special attention** to checking bearings and moving parts on your machinery.
- ▶ **Heavy machinery operators** need to be aware of what could be happening outside their air conditioned cabs.
- ▶ **Be aware of exhaust heat and spark** emission when driving through or parking in long dry grass on extreme fire danger days.
- ▶ **Carry appropriate fire extinguishers**, shovels or knapsack sprayers during high fire danger periods.
- ▶ **Stop using welders**, chainsaws, slashers and other machinery on extreme fire danger days.



Make sure you have public liability insurance with specific fire suppression cover under the sections 43 and 46 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977. You also need to consider insurance of property for loss and replacement. ”

# General preparedness



**Rural property and business owners need to determine the risk they run from fire. Irrespective of the risk, you should do these things to be fire smart around your property:**



## Ensure everyone

knows to dial 111  
in an emergency.

- ▶ **Maintain water supplies** with good access and adequate sign posting.
- ▶ **Provide appropriate tank/couplings** or adequate access to static water for portable pumps.
- ▶ **Ensure unhindered access** to your property for fire trucks and large vehicles by clearing roads and drives to a width and height of at least 4 meters.
- ▶ **Display your RAPID** (Rural Addressing Property Identification) number at the entrance of your property.
- ▶ **Keep a list of important** contact numbers by your phone.
- ▶ **Ensure everyone** knows to dial 111 in an emergency.
- ▶ **Have a battery powered** radio in case of power cuts.

# Assessing your risks

Ask yourself the following questions:

	YES	NO	ACTION NOW	ACTION LATER
<b>1</b> Is fire safety part of your rural business plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> Does your home or property have working smoke alarms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> Do you have an established escape plan for your property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> Do you have a sprinkler system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5</b> Do you have a RAPID number displayed at your property entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> Do you have a list of important contact numbers beside your phone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7</b> Do you have battery powered radios handy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>8</b> Do you carry appropriate insurances to fully protect you and your property against fire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



		YES	NO	ACTION NOW	ACTION LATER
<b>9</b>	Do you talk with your neighbours about fire safety and fire prevention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>10</b>	Do you follow fire safe practices on your property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>11</b>	Have you prepared a defensible space/safety zone around your property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>12</b>	Do you follow fire safe practices with your buildings and machinery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>13</b>	Is your machinery well maintained and safe to operate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>14</b>	Do you have fire-fighting equipment on or near your vehicles and machinery?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>15</b>	Do you undertake operations during extreme fire danger periods with fire safety in mind?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>16</b>	Do you know your fire authority and understand their rules in relation to fires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>17</b>	Do you carefully plan all fire lighting activities to minimise the risks of the fire escaping?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>18</b>	Are fuel supplies and chemicals safely stored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>19</b>	Are your power lines clear of trees and branches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>20</b>	Do you have adequate and accessible water supplies for fire fighting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>21</b>	Is there adequate access to your property for large fire trucks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## More information

- ▶ For more information on fire safety in your home, contact your nearest New Zealand Fire Service Brigade or visit **[www.fire.org.nz](http://www.fire.org.nz)** or **[www.nrfa.org.nz](http://www.nrfa.org.nz)**
- ▶ For information and advice on installing home sprinklers visit **[www.homesprinklers.fire.org.nz](http://www.homesprinklers.fire.org.nz)**
- ▶ For information on lighting fires or undertaking burning, or on fire danger and fire season status, contact your local district council or the closest Department of Conservation office.
- ▶ To get your Rural Addressing Property Identification number (RAPID), contact your local district council.
- ▶ For more technical information on protecting your home or property from the spread of vegetation fires, get a copy of the National Rural Fire Authority's manual "Fire Smart – Partners in Protection" by contacting the NRFA on **04 496 3600**.



[www.nrfa.org.nz](http://www.nrfa.org.nz)

Working with communities to protect what they value | Te mahi tahi ki ngā hapori, ki te tiaki i a rātou taonga

A protected New Zealand landscape | He kura whenua e kore rawa e ngaro