



Around the campfire: advice from the experts

A campfire is one of the great pleasures of outdoor leisure and recreation.

The smell of sausages cooking, sitting around in the warmth telling stories and the wafting smoke keeping the sandflies away. The flickering campfire is part and parcel of what makes the Kiwi summer experience so special. Yet, out of control, these fires can cause lasting impacts and be devastating to forests, natural habitats and farmland.

With summer and holiday time approaching, it is timely to be reminded about our responsibilities around lighting fires in forests, parks and rural areas.

“In the hot, dry conditions weather conditions,” says Kevin O’Connor, the National Rural Fire Officer, “fires are easy to start, but hard and costly to put out. So it is critical that people take simple precautions to avoid endangering life and property.”

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- Respect the higher fire risk during summer months. You may need a permit for your fire. Check out the [National Rural Fire Authority website](#) for when and where these restrictions are in place.
 - Strictly comply with fire bans. ‘Prohibited’ means a ban on the lighting of any fires in the open air.
 - Where fires are permitted and appropriate, their impact should be minimised – for example, keep the fires small and efficient, use existing fireplaces, burn only dead wood, and ensure that any fires are fully extinguished before leaving.
 - Once you are certain your fire is well and truly out, it’s a good idea to dismantle the fire site and scatter unburnt wood before leaving the area.
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- Never leave fires unattended.
- Fires in rural areas of New Zealand (including public conservation land) are the responsibility of those who light them. The cost of fighting fires on rural lands is the responsibility of the person who caused the fire.
- Putting out uncontrolled fires in rural areas is the responsibility of the National Rural Fire Authority. This is different from urban areas where the New Zealand Fire Service is in charge.
- If you are a walker or tramper crossing private land, be aware that landholders are concerned about the risk of fire. It might be a small risk, but it could have severe consequences, for you and them. The landholder’s decisions must be respected.
- Prevention is best: Contain small rubbish fires. Watch controlled fires carefully and never leave until the fire is completely out. Don’t light fires where they could spread (such as where there is nearby dry grass or vegetation).
- Seek help early. If you start a fire or see one, **call 111 immediately**.

Remember, the more responsible we are, the more likely our privileged, free access to the places we love to go, will endure.

More information about fire in the outdoors can be found on the following websites:

- [National Rural Fire Authority](#)
- [Department of Conservation](#)



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For further information visit the New Zealand Walking Access Commission website
www.walkingaccess.govt.nz

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