



Mid Canterbury
Provincial District

CROP RESIDUES BURNING CODE OF PRACTICE

2002/2003

The Ashburton District Council, as the Fire Authority for the District, can put in place measures controlling the lighting of fires in the open as fire danger levels rise during the summer fire season. These are:

FIRE RESTRICTIONS

The burning of crop residues only, is allowed during a **Restricted Fire Season**, providing certain conditions are met and safe practices are exercised.

FIRE PROHIBITION: (TOTAL FIRE BAN)

Declared in the interests of public safety when the fire danger levels are extreme. It is an offence to light any fire in the open during a **Prohibited Fire Season**.

1. Check Out the Current Status of Fire Control Measures

- 1.1 During the summer fire season when **Restrictions** or **Prohibitions** are declared, notices will be published as required, setting out the dates and provisions of the Fire Control Measures.
- 1.2 The Ashburton District Council will provide a taped 24 hour telephone service (telephone 308 5137) when Fire Control Measures are in place so that farmers may telephone to check current fire danger levels, the status regarding Restricted or Prohibited Seasons and the text of the message. Nine Fire Danger Indicator Boards placed alongside major roads within the district will keep the public informed of the fire danger status.
- 1.3 No person shall light an agricultural crop residue fire unless he/she has ascertained the current fire control status.
- 1.4 Ignorance of the current fire control status shall not be a defence against any liability for any consequences that may occur from an illegally lit fire.

2. Fire Break

- 2.1 No agricultural crop residue fire shall be lit until a completely non combustible fire break of no less than 5 metres width has been established around the area to be burned. Ensure it remains clean and clear of all combustible material.
- 2.2 Any breach of the fire break requirement under the Ashburton District Council Fire Plan will be deemed to be a breach of the fire burning regulations.
- 2.3 The safe practice of burnout is considered a good fire management strategy and should be encouraged at all times.
- 2.4 Immediately following the burn the firebreak and adjacent burnt area of windrow is to be cultivated to minimise the risk of reignition.
- 2.5 **Remain in attendance until the fire is completely out**, as reignition of a controlled burn can occur after a wind change. Always check the fire ground after violent wind changes.

3. Safe Conditions to Light a Fire

- 3.1 Good fire management practices must be observed at all times. **No fires should be lit in times of strong or gusty winds or unsettled weather.** Weather forecasts are available by ringing “Press infoline” 0900 999 25 (plains) or 0900 999 26 (high country). It is also advised that weather conditions existing in other parts of the District should be checked.
- 3.2 Where no fire control measures are in place and a stubble fire is lit that, in the opinion of the Principal Rural Fire Officer, does not satisfy provisions of this Code of Practice, the person lighting the fire will be responsible for any consequent firefighting costs.
- 3.3 It is recommended that an adequate supply of water, and a means of delivery, be on hand at all times when an agricultural fire is lit, or other fire fighting equipment, ie tractor, cultivator, grubber, beaters, fire extinguishers, are available on site.
- 3.4 It is recommended that no fires be lit where the smoke could cause a nuisance to adjacent towns or compromise traffic safety on major roads.
- 3.5 Smoke drift from stubble fires can cause a significant traffic hazard on public roads. Where there is a possibility of smoke drift across a public road, appropriate road signs should be used to warn motorists of the hazard.
- 3.6 Stubble burning is only to be carried out during the hours of daylight.

4. Liability on the Person Lighting an Agricultural Crop Residue Fire

- 4.1 In the case of a call out to a fire, the person lighting the fire shall be liable for any costs charged by the New Zealand Fire Service or the Ashburton District Council.
- 4.2 In the case of a call out to a fire where regulations have been breached, all firefighting labour and plant costs will be recovered by the District Council in line with standard rates as set by the National Rural Fire Authority.
- 4.3 The Ashburton District Council reserves the right to take prosecutions against a person or persons lighting fires that breach the Ashburton District Council Fire Restrictions, lighting a fire in unsuitable conditions, or with an inadequate fire break. Where no clear blame can be attributed to any one individual there should be no legal liability on the person lighting the agricultural residue fire.

5. Good Management Practice

- 5.1 Formulate a Burn Plan and inform neighbours of the date and time of the fire. Have an action plan in event of the fire escaping.
- 5.2 Ensure that those assisting are adequately dressed and briefed on safety aspects.
- 5.3 Regularly check machinery for possible build-up of straw and/or combustible material around manifolds or exhausts.
- 5.4 All agriculture stubble fires once lit must be supervised at all times.
- 5.5 Seek advice or training on safe burning practices.

Federated Farmers undertakes to inform and encourage farmers to adopt good crop residue fire management practices, within guidelines laid down by the Ashburton District Council. Responsibility for good fire management has been transferred back to farmers. Decisions must be made with the best interests of the community in mind.

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ASHBURTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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