

Burning Code of Practise

AGRICULTURAL CROP RESIDUES

BURNING CODE OF PRACTICE

2012/13

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

FIRE RESTRICTIONS

During a restricted fire season crop residue burning is allowed through a rural fire authority blanket authority which has a generic set of conditions which must be complied with. All other outdoor burning must be done through a permit system where a site visit will be carried out and site specific conditions will be applied. In all cases safe practices are expected to be 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 Ten Fire Danger Indicator Boards placed alongside major roads within the district 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 season status.
 - 1.4 Ignorance of the current fire season status shall not be a defence against any liability for any consequences that may occur from an illegally lit fire.

2. Fire Breaks

- 2.1 No agricultural crop residue fire shall be lit until a completely non-combustible continuous 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 backburning 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 “Met Service 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 Adequate fire breaks should be prepared prior to lighting any fire in the open air.
- 3.3 In any instance where a stubble fire has escaped and required an emergency service response, the person responsible for that fire is responsible for any consequent firefighting costs, regardless of how or why that fire escaped (Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 Section 43 (1) (a)).
- 3.4 It is recommended that an adequate supply of water, and a means of delivery, be on hand at all times during any crop residue burnoff.
- 3.5 Other fire fighting equipment, ie tractor, cultivator, grubber, beaters, fire extinguishers, should be available on site.
- 3.6 It is recommended that no fires be lit where the smoke could cause a nuisance to adjacent towns or neighbouring residences, or compromise traffic safety on roads.
- 3.7 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, and sufficient staff should be on site to temporarily stop traffic if necessary.
- 3.8 It is recommended a minimum of 2 adults be present during the controlled burn
- 3.9 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.

D Geddes
Principal Rural Fire Officer
ASHBURTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

D Clark
Chairman, Grains Section
FEDERATED FARMERS OF NZ (Mid Canty)