

Fire Mitigation Plan 2021/22 – Ground and Aerial Control

Use this information sheet as a guide for mitigating fire risk in times when the fire danger level may be very high or extreme.

Weekly Procedures

Contract crew supervisor to review fire weather forecast before the start of the week and decide on control plan. This should be based off the information from the fire weather forecasting website under “guidelines and upper limits” below. This information is to be relayed to crew leaders before work commences.

Daily Procedures

Daily toolbox/tailgate discussion should include:

- Fire danger of site being worked on
- Fire weather prediction for the day
- Escape routes e.g. shingle screes, large rocks, bare dirt, generally downhill
- Evacuation point
- Communication plan if fire starts

Plan your day around the weather, e.g. start early and use chainsaws until mid-morning, sprayers or hand tools from then on. Think of the aspect of certain sites in the valley. The valley floor and southern aspects are likely to be at less risk.

Crew leaders to take and record half-hourly weather readings with a Kestrel to monitor for the guidelines and upper limits mentioned above.

Vehicles parked on bare or green sites and facing escape route/evacuation point with keys left in ignition (where theft risk is low).

Cutting behaviours:

- Cut trees higher than usual to avoid rock strikes and dry grass
- Maintain chainsaws more frequently, keep sharper and cleaner
- Chainsaws not to be placed on dry grassy ground at any time in high fire danger.

Monitor site at the end of the day during pack-up for any delayed ignition caused from operations.

Guidelines and Upper limits to watch for

Use the information below to assess whether it is safe to use chainsaws in the field at any point during the day.

The first step is to check the Niwa fire weather website the night before or morning of commencing work, <https://fireweather.niwa.co.nz/>. Find the appropriate weather station for your location/MU (see the weather station sites at the end of page 2). If the fire danger is predicted to be very high or

extreme, then you will need to use a kestrel (handheld weather meter) to monitor several environmental conditions. These conditions are as follows:

Relative Humidity (RH): 35%-45%: Extreme care to be taken.

35% and below: Stop chainsaw work and reassess control plan for the remainder of the day.

Wind speed: Above 25kmph (average) if in very high or extreme fire danger.

Crossover: When the relative humidity becomes lower than the temperature. This does not happen often but when it does can lead to extreme fire risk and behaviour.

If one of these limits mentioned above is reached throughout the day, then chainsaw work should cease, or you should move to a new site.

As a general rule, **if grass becomes crunchy under foot then stop chainsaw work for the day.**

Equipment

- A 1kg fire extinguisher carried in all vehicles and an extra 4kg carried on each UTV.
- Spark arrestors fitted to all vehicles (excluding turbo's)
- Rega pumps or dedicated knapsacks kept in vicinity
- **Optional:** Extra vehicle (UTV or truck) to be kept on site as fire tender with a minimum carrying capacity of 300 litres. This is to be kept full when on site.

In the event of a fire

1. Attempt to put it out, but only if small, working around the edges with a fire extinguisher or spray gun/nozzle.
2. If fire suppression fails, make radio calls to crew members to let them know the situation and to begin evacuation.
3. Make contact to 111. Let them know location, what is burning and a quick brief on weather at site.
4. Use your escape routes and get to designated evacuation point.