

England and Wales Wildfire Forum (EWWF) Press Release

How to Reduce the Risk of Wildfires

Every year, fire destroys thousands of acres of countryside and wildlife habitats and although some are started deliberately most of them are due to carelessness. EWWF are reminding everyone to take particular care, not only during this current dry spell, but throughout the year to help reduce the unnecessary attendance of the Fire Service at preventable fires, which can quickly become large and protracted incidents given the current weather conditions.

Alex Bennett (EWWF Chair and Chief Fire Officer of Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service) said: **"For the last couple of weeks we have experienced some very hot and dry weather and it is only natural to want to go outdoors and enjoy it with family and friends, but it is also important to stay fire-aware when out and about."**

"With the dry weather set to continue for the next week at least, we are asking the public to be vigilant and by following these few simple steps we can all help to reduce the chance of a wildfire in the countryside."

Staying Safe Do's & Don'ts;

- Extinguish cigarettes properly, don't throw cigarette ends on the ground or out of car windows – take your litter home.
- Avoid open fires in the countryside. Always have them in safe designated areas.
- If you see a fire in the countryside, report it immediately to the Fire & Rescue Service. Early detection can prevent it from developing into a large wildfire incident.
- Don't attempt to tackle fires that can't be put out with a bucket of water – leave the area as quickly as possible.
- Landowners and Land Managers are also advised, where possible, to ensure that fire breaks are cut and well maintained with any cut grasses and vegetation removed from the site.

We are also warning people to be extra cautious when lighting barbeques and bonfires during the dry spell.

If you must have an open fire:

- Only use barbeques in suitable and safe area, never leave them unattended.
- Never use petrol, it can ignite quickly and soon get out of control. Only use approved lighting fuels.
- Make sure it is downwind and at least 10 metres away from any buildings or structures.
- Clear dry vegetation, such as leaves, to form a circle of earth around the fire.
- Never leave fires unattended and make sure they are fully extinguished after use.

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