



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 13

CONTROLLED BURNING AND WILDFIRES

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) is regularly called to fires which members of the public believe to be emergencies but, on attendance, are found to be instances of controlled burning. Such calls can have a serious drain on NIFRS resources and also put both the public and firefighters at risk when NIFRS respond under 'blue light' conditions.

Land managers are required to maintain their land for a range of purposes including grazing, crops, habitat management or leisure use. Although controlled burning is one method which can be used to assist with land management, those Land managers in receipt of EU area-based scheme payments are required to comply with the rules of Cross Compliance which means that they must not burn heather, gorse, whin or fern between 15 April and 31 August. Whilst there are benefits to controlled burning, NIFRS would remind Land managers that it should only be used when all other methods of land management have been exhausted. This is due to the associated hazards and potential risk of starting a wildfire.

Therefore, if you are controlled burning which will be visible to passers-by, you must inform NIFRS by calling 028 9266 4221 to prevent unnecessary mobilisations of fire appliances. We will want to know the following information:

- What time will you start burning?
- The exact location of your fire.
- A contact number for you, or whoever will be responsible for the burning.
- When the fire has been extinguished.

If you have no other option and decide to burn, then use the following basic fire safety advice and procedures:

- Choose a site which is clear and free from buildings, trees, overhead cables etc.
- Prepare the land correctly by cutting/flailing fire breaks into the boundary of the area you wish to burn. Fire breaks must always be downwind in order to contain the fire.
- Keep fires as small as possible to prevent them getting out of control.
- Make sure you have an emergency escape route available at all times.
- Do not use fuel to start fires; explosive vapour given off by the fuel can cause serious injuries.
- Never leave a fire unattended; ensure you have sufficient people and extinguishing media available to control the fire.
- Always ensure a fire is completely out before you leave it;

Weather conditions:

- Previous - several days of dry conditions will mean greater risk of fire spread.
- Current – Check weather forecast for wind strength and direction.
- 20/20 Rule – Never burn in winds above 20 mph or in temperatures above 20°C.

If a fire gets out of control then contact the Fire & Rescue Service immediately, by dialling 999 giving details of location and access.

Remember, a fire engine can only be in one place at one time; so if we're called to non-emergencies, it could impact on our attendance time to an incident where we are really needed!

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org



#STOPfire