

Wildfires & Heatwave – Advice for the public

On 19th July 2022 we dealt with almost 300 fires in 24 hours. Across Norfolk 20 homes were destroyed, and our countryside, much loved natural landscapes and wildlife were harmed due to extreme temperatures and wildfires. We are well equipped to deal with the challenges of fire, but we can all help to reduce the devastating impact at home and while enjoying our environment.

Protecting your home from wildfires

Embers and wind movement of fire tend to be the cause of most wildfires reaching property in rural areas.

- Observe your property externally, particularly any boundary fencing or hedges growing next to or in close proximity to fields/open ground. Try to keep these areas free from garden furniture, sheds or accumulated wood/waste products, children's toys or rubbish bins
- If you have decking, try not to use the area underneath for storage and remove any combustible materials/debris regularly. Where possible, keep storage of furniture to a minimum
- Check your fences, make sure there are no gaps between overlapping panels or between you and a neighbour's fence. Debris, such as dry leaves and embers could build up in these gaps causing a fire
- Consider replacing wooden/plastic/other combustible material fencing or gates with metal, helping to reduce a fire spread
- Keep your driveway, paths, gardens, patios and decking free from rubbish and debris to reduce available combustible sources
- Keep trees on your property trimmed back and away from the house, don't allow branches to overhang into gutters or towards the roof
- Be aware of weather reports, especially during extreme conditions and avoid using barbeques or lighting bonfires in the garden to reduce risk
- Think about home fire safety and ensure you have working smoke alarms on each level of your home, test them regularly and make an escape plan. Know what to do in the event of an emergency
- Consider storing important documents, paperwork such as Wills, Birth Certificates and precious photographs in a fireproof safe or box
- **If you see a fire spreading towards your home, close all doors and windows to limit the chance of fire spreading into your home, evacuate to a safe area and call 999.**

General wildfire advice

- Don't drop cigarettes or any burning item onto dry ground
- Ensure cigarettes are fully extinguished even when smoking outside, don't throw them from car windows where they may land on dry ground or grass by the roadside
- Don't leave glass products behind when enjoying time outside, direct sunlight through glass can cause fire risk
- Don't use barbeques in fields, open grassland, parks and forests, especially during periods of hot, dry weather
- Don't use single-use portable barbeques, not only are they a significant fire risk but you cannot recycle any part of it. Where these are used ensure they are fully extinguished and cold before safe disposal.
- Don't use barbeques on balconies, smouldering ash can be carried away towards dry ground/grassland or neighbouring properties
- Be aware of using barbeques, fire pits or bonfires around thatched properties, it only takes one spark or ash/embers moved by wind to cause accidental fire
- Don't drive on dry grass/fields – your vehicle's exhaust can reach more than 1000 degrees, avoid parking or driving your vehicle over dry grass

One of the most important actions you can take to protect your home, belongings and family is to ensure you **have suitable and adequate Home Insurance**. In the event of any fire, or if you witness a smouldering fire, please do not hesitate to call **999**. We can react quickly, bringing the fire under control and reducing the potential for that fire to spread further. The sooner we respond allows us the ability to ensure the right resources are mobilised keeping our service ready to act to all emergency calls.