

Plan now to reduce outside fire risk

WHILE the focus of this column is targeted at those who live on lifestyle properties, the information is just as relevant for larger farms.

Recent polar weather conditions have not got us thinking about outside fire problems just yet, but give it another four to five weeks and that is exactly what we will be faced with. **NOW** is a very good time to plan what work is required around your property in order to make it FireSmart.

Generally, with smaller properties, there is a greater likelihood that activities you undertake on your property will affect others, whether that is machinery noise or smoke from a fire.

From a fire perspective, we all have a responsibility to consider the effects our activities might have, so consideration needs to be given to neighbours and their property, powerlines and smoke drift among other things.

Most properties have trees and hedges planted for shelter, with many owners opting to burn the pruned branches.

We recommend that heaps are kept small (less than

FIRE BREAK



Advice from Mike Grant
On behalf of Otago/Southland
Regional Rural Fire Committee

2mx2m) and are placed at least 30m from other combustible material (vegetation and buildings) and lit only when there is a light breeze blowing away from danger areas, roads and neighbouring properties.

You also need to be in attendance and have a water supply available.

Fire authorities are receiving more and more complaints about smoke nuisance.

This generally is not a fire authority responsibility unless there is a fire safety issue and you are more likely to get a visit from your local regional council, which has responsibility for air quality.

To avoid adverse smoke, it is better to leave your material to dry out completely before burning.

You are responsible for your fire and any consequences



Be FireSmart: Remove all trees, long grass, shrubs, logs, branches, twigs and needles within 10m of a house to prevent a fire getting to close to it.

PHOTO: YVONNE O'HARA

arising from a fire that you have lit or authorised, including any accident caused by it.

It is a good idea to move material to be burnt away from roads to avoid smoke hazards for motorists.

Trees that grow too close to power lines are a danger.

They can break power lines, cause power failure and damage equipment as well as causing fires.

Tree owners are responsible for their trees and any damage

they cause to power lines.

Spring normally brings windy weather, so now is the time to contact your local power authority for advice on tree maintenance.

Contact your local rural fire authority to get a copy of the FireSmart manual so you can start mitigating fire risks around your home.

Mike Grant writes this column on behalf of the Otago/Southland Regional Rural Fire Committee.

FIRE PREVENTION CHECKLIST

THE following checklist is a good start to reducing potential fire damage around your home.

A Prune tree branches to a height of 2m or more.

B Store firewood 10m or more from the house (avoid downslope location).

C Remove trees, long grass, shrubs, logs branches, twigs and needles within 10m of house.

D Thin trees (with 3m to 6m between crowns) for at least 30m from the house.

E Contact your power company if trees or branches are not clear of power lines.

F Clear vegetation within 10m of buildings by mowing or spraying to reduce fuel loading

G Use a RAPID sign for quick identification by emergency services.

H Ensure driveway is wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles.

I Try to provide an alternate emergency access route to your property.

J Have access to a pond or pool with an emergency water supply.

K Have an approved FireSmart incinerator.

L Keep driveway clear of trees to a distance of at least 4m.

M Ensure eaves are enclosed and screen vents.

N Keep undersides of balconies and decks clear of debris and leaf materials.

O Use only fire-resistant roofing materials and fire-resistant exterior cladding.

(Copy: NRFA FireSmart Home Owners manual)