

LAND AND FOREST FIRES

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Stating the obvious

- **FOREST FIRES DO NOT TEND TO START NATURALLY IN IRELAND – THEY ARE NEARLY ALWAYS LIT FROM OUTSIDE THE FOREST AND SPREAD.**
- **THE MAIN CAUSES INCLUDE:**
 - **ILLEGAL/INAPPROPRIATE BURNING OF LAND**
 - **CARELESSNESS**
 - **MALICIOUS INTENT**



Stating the law

- ▶ **UNDER THE WILDLIFE ACT, 1976 (AS AMENDED), IT IS ILLEGAL TO BURN GROWING VEGETATION ON LAND NOT THEN CULTIVATED, BETWEEN 1 MARCH AND 31 AUGUST IN ANY YEAR.**



SOME STATISTICS

- ❖ IN THE 20 YEARS PRIOR TO 2010, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT AN AVERAGE OF 250 TO 300 HECTARES OF FOREST, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, WAS DESTROYED ANNUALLY BY FIRE.
- ❖ DURING 2010, THE FIRE LOSS TOTAL AMOUNTED TO MORE THAN 1,500 HECTARES.
- ❖ 2011 SAW LOSSES ON A PAR WITH 2010.



The need for action

- ❖ ARISING FROM THE 2010 FIRES PROBLEM AND FOLLOWING REQUESTS FROM BOTH THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FORESTRY SECTORS, THE LAND AND FOREST FIRES WORKING GROUP WAS ESTABLISHED IN JUNE 2010.

- ❖ THE REMIT OF THE GROUP WAS TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL AND UNCONTROLLED BURNING.

- ❖ MEMBERSHIP INCLUDED:
 - Government Departments
 - Forest industry
 - Coillte
 - Teagasc
 - I.F.A.
 - The Emergency Services



THE 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **CHANGE THE MINDSET**
2. FIRE PREVENTION/FOREST MANAGEMENT ADVICE
3. EARLY DETECTION
4. PENALTIES/PROSECUTION
5. INTERAGENCY STATEMENT
6. INTENTION TO BURN
7. PRODUCER GROUPS
8. COLLATE DATA
9. **CODE OF PRACTICE**
10. RESEARCH

Recommendation 1 – the publicity campaign

- ❑ In January 2011, the Forest Service began a publicity campaign.
- ❑ Press advertisements, press articles, Press Releases.
- ❑ Stands at the Birr Forestry Show and the Ploughing Championships.
- ❑ The latest press advertisement is published in this week's farming press.
- ❑ This focus on changing the mindset via publicity will continue during 2012 and thereafter.





Prescribed Burning Code of Practice - Ireland



Recommendation 9 – the Code of Practice

- ▶ Following extensive research and stakeholder consultations the Code of Practice has been developed, drafted and has received ministerial approval.
- ▶ The document has been placed on the Department website, www.agriculture.gov.ie.
- ▶ A 4 page synopsis of the code has also been produced for distribution to farmers in targetted areas of the country.



The need for training

- ▶ The training of people to carry out prescribed burning operations is vital if the central recommendation of the Working Group is to be achieved – CHANGE THE MINDSET REGARDING THE USE OF FIRE IN TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES.
- ▶ The Forest Service has already funded training courses for this purpose at the back end of 2011.
- ▶ Review and further development of the training material is ongoing.

Fire Reporting

- ▶ Prompt reporting of forest fires is essential.
- ▶ A dedicated email address report.fires@agriculture.gov.ie has been allocated.
- ▶ Fires can also be reported by ‘phoning Lo-call number 1 890 200 509.
- ▶ A circular containing this information issued in November 2011 to all forest owners in receipt of grant/premia payments, to registered foresters and the Forestry Companies.

Reporting of fire damage

- ▶ Obligation on forest owners in receipt of grant/premia payments to maintain and protect their forests for up to 20 years.
- ▶ This means there is an obligation to replant where a forest is damaged by fire.
- ▶ The procedure involves the use of Reconstitution Notification Forms 1,2 and 3 and is outlined in the circular referred to in the previous slide.
- ▶ In the absence of reconstitution grants, there is emphasis on the need for adequate insurance cover, including for reconstitution costs.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

- ▶ The Forest Service wishes to again acknowledge the work of the Fire and Rescue Service, the Gardai, the Defence Forces, Coillte and the numerous local volunteers who contributed to the fire fighting effort during 2010 and 2011.



The core message must always be

**IF I START A FIRE CAN I STOP
IT?**

REMAIN VIGILANT!

IF IN DOUBT, DO NOT BURN!!

THANK YOUAND LET

US ENSURE THAT 'THE FORESTS WILL ECHO WITH LAUGHTER'

