

WILDFIRE ESCALATION REPORTING ROUTES IN NATURAL ENGLAND

Updated May 2025



WHEN TO REPORT:

Wildfires should be reported where they are significant and occur on NE's estate or on land where NE have an interest. Significance is a matter of judgement for Area Managers/Teams. Factors may include extent or severity of the wildfire and scale of emergency response, impact on priority habitats or landscapes, threat of disruption to infrastructure: homes, roads, pipelines, overhead power cables etc.

Fires should also be reported where they meet with Defra's wildfire notification triggers below.

Defra Wildfire notification triggers:

- Wildfires that draw a large media interest;
- Concern that a wildfire may last for days rather than a few hours;
- Wildfires that effect peat land;
- Wildfires that are impacting on people or property i.e. loss of life and /or damage to homes and businesses;
- If a major incident has been declared.

(As each wildfire is different this is not an exhaustive list of triggers)

Linked protocol: Drought

HOW TO REPORT/WHO TO REPORT TO:

A. During Office Hours

B. Out of office Hours

A. Wildfires during NE Office hours

1. Upon being notified of a significant/Defra notification trigger wildfire, NE staff should notify their **Deputy Director Area Teams** with key details:

- the location (if possible: grid reference, location 'name' and county; SSSI site name, NNR name)
- time of notification
- who has notified us (member of the public, Fire and Rescue Service, NNR staff on site, etc)

2. Deputy Director Area Teams alerts:

- Chief Operating Officer – [REDACTED]
- Operations Directors – [REDACTED]
- NE wildfire co-ordination – [REDACTED]
- Deputy for Chris Fry – [REDACTED]
- Principal Adviser Uplands – [REDACTED]
- Duty Officer NEdutyofficer@naturalengland.org.uk *
- Health & Safety team healthandsafety@naturalengland.org.uk
- External comms - **SM-Defra-NEExternalComms (DEFRA)** <NEExternalComms@defra.gov.uk>
- If on an NNR - **NE Estate team** ([REDACTED], NNR Operations Manager and relevant NNR team)
- If on an SSSI - protectedsites@naturalengland.org.uk

[REDACTED] &/or the Duty Officer in NE's Emergency Team then keeps the above list updated on the incident and liaises with Defra Emergency Incident Team as necessary.

B. Wildfires during 'Out of Office Hours' (5pm until 9:00am Monday to Friday, Weekends and Bank Holidays)

1. Duty Officer may be alerted by a member of NE, the public or Fire and Rescue service of a significant wildfire on possible NE site. The NE out of hours Duty Officer can be reached via 0300 060 3900 (email NEDutyofficer@naturalengland.org.uk). The Duty Officer will obtain as much information from the informant such as grid reference, location name and county, SSSI site name, NNR name.
2. Duty Officer will:
 - check NE Maps for designations (SSSI, NNR)
 - if on an NNR, call the **NNR Reserve Manager** for the relevant NNR to alert them. see [Emergency plan TRIM locations Nov22.xlsx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
 - Email the Deputy Director Area Teams
 - escalate to their Strategic Cover and then on their approval the Duty Officer or Strategic Cover will email:
 - Chief Operating Officer – [REDACTED]
 - Operations Directors – [REDACTED]
 - Manager Access/NE wildfire co-ordination – [REDACTED]
 - Deputy for Chris Fry – [REDACTED]
 - Principal Adviser Uplands – [REDACTED]
 - Health & Safety team healthandsafety@naturalengland.org.uk
 - External comms - SM-Defra-NE External Comms (DEFRA) <NEExternalComms@defra.gov.uk>
 - If on an NNR - NE Estate team [REDACTED] NNR Operations Manager and relevant NNR team)
 - If on an SSSI - protectedsites@naturalengland.org.uk

NB all the above are not on call and will ensure response as applicable by the next working day – out of office responses will be adhered to and emails will be sent to the delegated authority in their absence.

- Contact Defra Duty officer on 0330 041 6565.
- Contact the Defra Duty Press Officer

The role of the Duty Officer will cease at 9:00 am the next working day, but the Duty Officer should be still cc'd into emails so that they can assist should they need to that evening

UPDATES ON SITUATION/WILDFIRE:

Area Team rep to provide summary daily update (until the fire is under control/out) on the situation to:

- NE wildfire co-ordination – [REDACTED]
- Deputy for Chris Fry – [REDACTED]

Who will then update NE Chief Operating Officer, Operations Directors, named individuals in NE, and as necessary NE's Emergency Team.

If the Defra Emergency Incident Group is stood up, daily updates as set out as 'Additional Info, para 2' (below) will be required.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- A. Defra Wildfire Emergency Incident Group
- B. Recording of Wildfire Incidents
- C. Fire Restrictions on open country.

A. Defra Wildfire Emergency Incident Group

1. If any fires are declared a 'Major Incident' then Defra may set up a daily call with NE, FC, EA, Met Office, and relevant National Parks and Fire & and Rescue Service. (The Defra Group is also stood up further to specific triggers from the Daily Hazards Assessment (DHA)).
2. NE - through [REDACTED] (working with relevant Area Team contacts) - then provide daily info to Defra on e.g.:
 - the Fire Severity Index (see below),
 - designations e.g. SSSI, SAC, SPA
 - agri-environment schemes,
 - the extent of the blaze,
 - whether it is open access land,
 - if there are PROW going through,
 - what we know about land ownership,
 - NE involvement locally.

Deputy Director Area Teams to provide this information to [REDACTED].

3. If Defra Emergencies Operations Centre are aware of a significant wildfire (possibly on the NE estate) they alert:
 - NE emergency response co-ordinator – [REDACTED]
 - NE wildfire co-ordination – [REDACTED]
 - Deputy for [REDACTED]
 - Deputy for [REDACTED] – NE Duty Officer mailbox

Who in turn will alert:

- Chief Operating Officer
- Operations Directors
- Relevant Deputy Direct Area Teams
- Health & Safety Team
- Duty Officer
- If an NNR - NNR team and NNR Operations Manager - [REDACTED]

B. Recording of wildfire incidents

4. There is a spreadsheet for the recording of wildfire incidents that advisors and NNR colleagues should complete when they become aware of incidents on SSSI's **NB This is not just on Natural England NNRs but on any SSSI site where NE is made aware of a wildfire incident occurring.** It is in the Wildfire SharePoint site and can be accessed at the link below:

<https://defra.sharepoint.com/:x/s/Community870/EQrMYGhxgwJJslesKqBfJAEB1KkVRQfqTes6gXSt8psZEq?e=zMwScg>

C. Fire restrictions on 'open country' (designated under CROW 2000) and RCL.

5. Areas of open access land are only closed in specific circumstances. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) allows the Relevant Authority (National Park Authorities or Natural England) by direction to exclude or restrict access to land mapped as open country if - because of 'exceptional' weather conditions - it is necessary to do so for the purposes of fire prevention. Where there are outline restrictions in place, this happens automatically. In order to determine whether conditions are 'exceptional', a national but locally sensitive Fire Severity Index (which is updated daily), operated by the Met Office is used. Whilst it is possible to restrict public access using CROW powers in the situation described in the above paragraph (i.e. when the FSI is 'exceptional'), public rights of way across open access land remain open and available for use.
 6. The FSI is an indication of the likely severity of a wildfire should one occur. It should not be confused with the Daily Hazard Assessment (DHA) which is a daily report providing an overview of natural hazards for use by Govt agencies and first responders.
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