

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

WAIPA RURAL FIRE AUTHORITY - RURAL FIRE PLAN

1 PROPOSAL

To review Part 1 Reduction and Part 4 Recovery of the Waipa Rural Fire Authority Rural Fire Plan.

2 SUMMARY

Waipa District Council is the Rural Fire Authority for Waipa District. Under the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005, the Waipa Rural Fire Authority must prepare and adopt a Rural Fire Plan, which is a statement compiled and issued by the Fire Authority, defining policy, chain of command and procedures in relation to fire control.

The Waipa Rural Fire Authority Rural Fire Plan was adopted by Council with an implementation date of September 2005.

Part 2 of the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005 covers Fire Control Operations and requires that a Fire Plan must set out the policies and procedures of the Rural Fire Authority under the headings of Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery.

Once adopted/implemented, the 'Readiness' and 'Response' sections of the Plan must be reviewed no more than two (2) years after the date of adoption. The 'Reduction' and 'Recovery' sections of the Plan must be reviewed no more than five (5) years after the date of adoption. The National Rural Fire Authority must be advised of any amendments as they arise.

Review dates are two and five years from September 2005. The first two reviews of the Response and Readiness sections were carried out and adopted by Council on 28 August 2007 and 8 August 2009. This will be the first review of the other two sections of the Rural Fire Plan, Reduction and Recovery.

These two sections of the report have been reviewed by the Principal Rural Fire Officer and no changes have been identified so it is recommended that the plan remain in its current form.

3 RECOMMENDATION

That

- a) *The report of the Principal Rural Fire Officer, Chuck Davis, dated 24 August 2010, and the information contained therein, be received.*

4 LEGAL

Waipa District Council has a statutory delegation to carry out the functions of a Rural Fire Authority as set out within the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, and the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005.

Section 39 Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005 – “Fire Authority must adopt fire plan –

- 1) Fire Authority in existence at the commencement of these regulations must prepare and adopt a fire plan no later than 60 days after the commencement of these regulations;
- 2) Any other Fire Authority must prepare and adopt a fire plan no later than 90 days after the Fire Authority is appointed, constituted, or otherwise formed;
- 3) A fire plan must set out the policies and procedures of the Fire Authority under the following headings and in the following order:
 - a) Reduction
 - b) Readiness
 - c) Response
 - d) Recovery
- 4) A Fire Authority must provide to the NRFA a copy of its fire plan no later than 30 days after the fire plan is adopted.

Section 40 – Fire Plan must be reviewed;

- 5) A Fire Authority must review a fire plan adopted under regulation 39, -
 - a) in relation to the matters contained under the headings “Readiness” and “Response” not more than 2 years after the date the plan was adopted; and
 - b) in relation to the matters contained under the headings “Reduction” and “Recovery”, not more than 5 years after the date the plan was adopted.”

5 BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Fire Service has operational jurisdiction within the urban areas of Te Awamutu and Cambridge. The balance of the area within the Waipa District Council Rural Fire Authority (with the exception of the DOC-controlled areas with their accompanying 1km margin) is under the jurisdiction of the Waipa Rural Fire Authority.

NB. The Cambridge Urban Fire area was enlarged in December 2008, map attached as appendix 3, which removes that area from Rural Fire jurisdiction, with the consequence that it will fall under the jurisdiction of the New Zealand Fire Service.

There is a first response Volunteer Rural Fire Fighting Force in Pirongia. They respond to urban fires (buildings) under an arrangement with the New Zealand Fire Service. They attend to rural fires under an arrangement between the Rural Fire Authority and the New Zealand Fire Service.

RURAL FIRE PLAN

The first section of this Plan sets the scene within which rural fire operations are undertaken in the Waipa Rural Fire District. Information on the district and the statutory framework within which the Rural Fire Authority operates are also detailed there.

The Plan is structured around the four components of emergency management being: Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery.

a) Reduction

The Reduction section deals with how the risk of fire is managed and public education/awareness matters are undertaken.

b) Readiness

The Readiness section provides maps of the area (held at the Emergency Operating Centre of the Waipa District Council). It also outlines a chain of command diagram and specifies the responsibilities of the Rural Fire Authority, covering the policies and procedures relating to ensuring that people are trained, and have sufficient resources to undertake fire fighting activities.

c) Response

The Response section covers the aspects required to fight and put out rural fires. It includes priorities, health and safety, communications and fire ground activities.

Initial response to all Rural Fires in Waipa is managed by the Waikato Bay of Plenty Fire Region under agreement with the New Zealand Fire Service.

This enables all the resources available to the wider region to be available to combat any incident in our district. The District local volunteer fire brigades are called upon as the first response to any rural incident.

The Te Awamutu Volunteer Fire Brigade hold the Rural Fire Ute with fire fighting equipment.

d) Recovery

The Recovery section deals with how the Rural Fire Authority investigates fires, and reviews and critiques its operations following any incident.

The last section of the Fire Plan deals with administrative matters such as financial matters, Plan reviews, and arrangements between other Rural Fire districts.

6 COMMENT

This is the first review of Sections 1 and 4 of the Waipa Rural Fire Authority Rural Fire Plan adopted under the new regulations. The review of this plan (2005), prepared under the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005, ensures Council's compliance with its legal obligations as a rural Fire Authority.

Because Section 40 of the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005 says Council must review sections 1 and 4 at five-yearly intervals, the sections have now been reviewed by The Principal Rural Fire Officer. No changes are proposed and the plan can remain the same as when adopted in 2005

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with the management and operation of the territorial area are met by Council. The base operating costs of rural fire resources is the responsibility of the Waipa District Council.

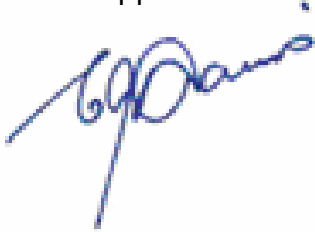
A charge can be made for costs incurred by the Rural Fire Authority (Council) in response to a fire, in accordance with the provisions of the Waikato Regional Rural Fire Committee Memorandum of Understanding Between Fire Authorities.

The Rural Fire Authority may also initiate prosecution where there is clear evidence of negligence or deliberate contravention of forest and rural fires legislation. There is also provision for costs to be claimed against the Rural Fire Fighting Fund, by the Fire Authority, in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Service Act 1977.

There are no additional financial implications arising from the review of Parts 1 and 4 of this plan.

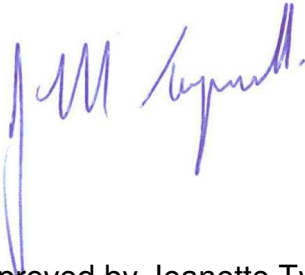
8 PUBLIC RELATIONS/COMMUNICATION

No formal consultation is required with regard to this review. The National Rural Fire Authority will be advised that the review has taken place and as there are no proposed changes another copy of the Fire Plan need not be supplied.



Chuck Davis
PRINCIPAL RURAL FIRE OFFICER

Peer reviewed by Jennie McFarlane
MANAGER LEGAL & CORPORATE SUPPORT



Approved by Jeanette Tyrrell
MANAGER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS



Ross McNeil
GROUP MANAGER PLANNING & COMMUNITY RELATIONS

APPENDIX 1:

WAIPA DISTRICT RURAL FIRE AUTHORITY

Rural Fire Plan

PART 1 REDUCTION

1.1 *Fire Prevention Planning*

The Waipa Rural Fire Authority plans a fire management programme directed towards mitigation or elimination of those hazards and risks that pose the greatest potential to cause unacceptable damage or losses. The focus is on preventing large and damaging fires and the associated reduction of fire suppression costs.

Hazards are areas that have a potential to burn. Risks are the uses, activities or events with the potential to cause a fire ignition.

Where fire hazards and fire risks are identified, consultation will be taken with the relevant landholders in order to manage these hazards and risks.

Where fire hazardous sites are identified the Principal Rural Fire Officer will request the landholder that has responsibility for the hazard to carry out fire breaking, fuel modification or fuel reduction burning, or any other action necessary, in order to reduce the hazard or to mitigate fire development.

The Principal Rural Fire Officer will ensure that as necessary an analysis of fire reports is carried out in order to identify the predominant types and cause of fire and will formulate action plans that focus on the mitigation of the impacts of fire and on the prevention of fire occurrence.

1.2 *Publicity and Education*

The Waipa Rural Fire Authority encourages community awareness of the threat of fire and of the responsible use of fire.

The Principal Rural Fire Officer has the authority and the responsibility to make arrangements with local print and radio media and the use of signs as necessary to ensure that local communities are aware of prevailing fire danger conditions.

Public awareness of rural fire is maintained through a multi-faceted approach including:

- Proactive media releases following fires;
- Media releases during periods of increased fire danger;
- Erection of fire restriction or prohibition signs, and updating of fire danger indicator signs;
- Proactive investigation of fire sightings during periods of increased fire danger;
- Education initiatives through community meetings and schools;
- Advice to land owners; and
- Inspection of proposed burn-offs and issue of fire permits.

1.3 Public awareness and fire signs

Notification on the implementation/lifting of a Restricted or Prohibited Fire Season will be placed in the Public Notice Column of the Waikato times, The Te Awamutu Courier and Cambridge Edition newspapers.

During a Prohibited Fire Season '*Total Fire Ban*' and '*Light No Fires*' signs will be erected at strategic locations throughout the District, as soon as possible after such a season has been declared.

Other non-regulatory public educational signage may be erected from time to time. [*Refer Regulation 41(2)(c)*]

1.4 Fire Protection Works

Protection works are those associated with the provision and maintenance of:

- Firebreaks (as provided for in legislation – refer to Section 27, Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977)
- Access (to be kept open and in useable condition)
- Water supply points (identified at roadsides and kept clear and accessible)
- Aircraft support facilities (where deemed necessary at appropriate sites)

The Rural Fire Authority may at any time, by notice in writing signed on its behalf by the Principal Rural Fire Officer, require any landholder of any land within the Fire District to make and clear, within the time and in the manner specified by the notice, such fire breaks, and in such positions, as the Principal Rural Fire Officer considers necessary for the purpose of fire control. All firebreaks are to be kept free of flammable material at all times.

Where flammable vegetation is present, landholders are recommended to undertake, as a fire control measure, fuel modification to provide a defensible space for structures, to the following dimensions and locations:

- Flat land (< 10° slope) - 25 metres all around

- Sloping land (> 10° slope) - 10m uphill; 15m side; 30m downhill

Note: Fuel modification is required so as to avoid concentrations of flammable vegetation or trees within the specified areas, and especially near the structure.

Any fire protection works that may be required, and which provide the infrastructure for fire suppression action, will be established in accordance with the principles of environmental care.

1.5 Use of Fire as a Land Management Tool

The policy is to permit the use of fire within the territorial area in accordance with the following provisions:

- (a) The issue of fire permits during any period that fire restrictions are in place is subject to an evaluation of current and forecasted fire danger conditions by the issuing Rural Fire Officer or the Principal Rural Fire Officer to ensure that any permitted fires are lit during low fire risk weather conditions to minimise the potential for an escaped fire situation.
- (b) Applications for a Special Fire Permit during a period of fire prohibition may be granted under the provisions of the Forest and Rural Fires legislation.
- (c) The use of fire for land clearing operations or disease control must comply with any requirements of the District Plan, Council Bylaws, EW Regional Council "Clean Air" Policy, and provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991 and amendments.
- (d) All activities must comply with provisions of Sections 20 and 21 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, as well as complying with the conditions stated on permits issued pursuant to Sections 23 and 24 of the Act.
- (e) Any fire must remain contained within the property on which it is lit and shall not be permitted to spread to other properties or to structures. A burn plan must be prepared for prescribed burning during a Restricted Fire Season.
- (f) Use of fire on land adjoining Crown land, forests, or another Fire Authority requires consultation with the appropriate person responsible for those adjoining areas.
[Refer Regulation 41(2)(d)]

This strategy recognises that appropriate planning should be provided for fires that have the potential to get out of control and cause injury or damage to property.

1.6 Declared Forests

There are no areas in the Waipa District that have been declared as forest areas under section 17 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act:

1.7 By-laws Relating to Fire Control

Waipa District Council has a urban fire bylaw which restricts open air fires within the urban areas of Te Awamutu, Cambridge, and Kihikihi. Permits can be granted at the discretion of the Environmental Officers. This bylaw does not impact directly on the Rural Fire Authority.

1.8 Plan and Policy Compliance

Compliance with established and agreed standards is targeted through consultation with all parties concerned. Where necessary the Rural Fire Authority will apply the provisions of relevant legislation in order to gain compliance with those standards.

1.9 Access Requirements and Standards

The Waipa District Council has no specific policy or standards in terms of access (other than standards entrance requirements off its roads) to potential rural fire areas. It is, nevertheless in the interests of landowners to have suitable access to all parts of their properties, and any fire suppression activities could be hampered if suitable access is not available.

1.10 Fire Risk and Mitigation Systems

Hazards and risks form a significant part of the wildfire threat analysis. The following steps are presently undertaken to mitigate hazards:

- Annual roadside grass mowing programme on major roads/highways with monitoring of vegetation re-growth levels by Regulatory Officers;
- Additional roadside mowing requested as determined by seasonal variations;
- Encouraging road-side grazing by farmers in risk areas;
- Volunteer Rural Fire Force established due to isolation of resources;
- Fire appliances and equipment are maintained to a high state of readiness;
- Public kept informed of increasing fire risk through media;
- Daily graphing of fire weather indices for fire prediction purposes during restricted season;
- Restricted Fire Season declared during periods of increased fire danger.

1.11 Fire Prevention Measures

The Waipa District Council Rural Fire Authority is committed to promoting and developing fire prevention measures in its fire bylaws and in partnership with the NZ Fire Service and National Rural Fire Authority to reduce the incidence and impact of rural fires in the Waipa District.

[Refer Regulation 41(2)(b)]

1.12 Fire Danger Management

Wildfires can occur throughout the year and as such, a high state of readiness is maintained for 365 days. Increased monitoring and assessment occurs as the fire danger intensifies. The Waipa Rural Fire Authority imposes a restricted fire season annually from 1st December until the 31st March.

The Waipa Rural Fire Authority monitors the risk of outbreaks of fire on a daily basis throughout the restricted season by recording, plotting, and analysing data from:

- Daily Fire Weather Indices from National Rural Fire Authority;
- Known fire hazards and previous fire history;
- Local Fuel Loading on the ground;
- Local climatic conditions;
- Reconnaissance and intelligence from rural communities; and when deemed necessary, by physical checks of rural areas by experienced and qualified Rural Fire Officers.

This information assists rural fire management staff to ascertain local fuel loads, risk of outbreaks, ease of ignition, likely spread rates, and potential fire behaviour.

1.13 Fire Management Control Measures

The Forest and Rural Fires Act requires each Rural Fire Authority to promote and carry out fire control measures within its district, and in the interests of public safety take appropriate fire control measures, including, in particular:

- (a) The observation of weather and other conditions, and the assessment of fire hazard; (Fire weather indices recording as above 1.12).
- (b) The giving of warnings of the imminence of fire hazard conditions; and
- (c) The giving of any information available in relation to fire hazard conditions.

As detailed within this Fire Plan, the Waipa District Council undertakes these and other measures to reduce the likelihood of fires occurring within its district.

The Waipa District Rural Fire Authority has assessed and calculated its Minimum Standard of Cover Rating, as Minimum Standard 'D'. This is based on the previous Rural Fire Management Code of Practice 2000, which is accepted by the NRFA as "Best Practice".

Details of calculations are shown on Annex 3.

1.14 *Regard to National and Regional Policy Statements, Regional and District Plans and regulations made under the RMA*

In undertaking its Rural Fire responsibilities Waipa District Council takes account of the Resource Management Act and its own District Plan and bylaws.

[Refer Regulation 41(2)(e)(iv)]

1.15 *Clean Air requirements*

The Ministry for the Environment has produced National Air Quality Standards, which came into effect on 8 October 2004.

The Air Quality Standards:

- Ban activities that discharge significant quantities of dioxins and other toxics into the air;
- Set minimum standards for outdoor air quality;
- Provide the design standard for new wood burners installed in urban areas; and
- Establish the requirement for landfills over 1 million tonnes of refuse to collect greenhouse gas emissions.

Environment Waikato Regional Council has developed Rules in its Regional Resource Management Plan to limit the effects of smoke from industrial, agriculture, and home based activities. The Regional Council also provides information on good burning practice, specifies what material cannot be burnt, and also has rules for the burning of waste products. Further details on the Regional Council's rules can be found on their website www.ew.govt.nz

APPENDIX 2:

WAIPA DISTRICT RURAL FIRE AUTHORITY

Rural Fire Plan

PART 4 RECOVERY

4.1 *Fire Site Rehabilitation*

As soon as practicable after a fire is declared safe the Principal Rural Fire Officer may, if considered necessary, arrange for an assessment of the fire site to determine what, if any, rehabilitation measures need to be taken.

Any such assessment must consider the following:

- Need for repairs to soil disturbance or exposure as a result of access track or fire control line construction
- Drainage control work on temporary access tracks and constructed fire control lines
- Removal of soil and vegetation deposited in streams or wetlands as a result of fire fighting provided this can be achieved without a resultant increase in environmental disturbance
- Collection and removal of litter, plastic containers etc. associated with fire operations.

The policy is that the costs of rehabilitation required as a result of fire damage or as a result of damage done during suppression operations will be borne by either the person responsible for causing the fire or the landholder whose land is involved.

4.2 *Debriefs*

A debrief conforming with the requirements and procedures set out in the “National Template for Fire Debriefs” (NRFA circular #19) will be held following each major fire incident attended by the Fire Authority.

The Fire Authority will investigate all major fires that occur within the Fire District. Debriefs will be held following most rural fires, and full investigations, as appropriate and required by the RFMCOP will be carried out, using the services of a specialist fire investigator, if required, in one or more of the following instances:

- There has been loss of human life
- Significant property damage has occurred
- Significant environmental damage has occurred
- Suppression costs have been very high

All debriefs should occur as soon as the incident has been declared out or within ten (10) days of the fire being declared out. A record of all debriefs shall be kept by the Fire Authority.

Obligations to make changes/improvements that are identified in the debrief shall be allocated to a named person who will be responsible for the outcome.

The debrief is not intended to be a “witch-hunt” but an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of Fire Control systems, Fire Suppression, co-operation and co-ordination from an actual Fire Emergency situation.

4.3 Health and Safety

Special attention shall be paid in debriefs to matters that had actual or potential adverse effects in respect of health and safety.

When fire fighting has been prolonged, or there were associated traumatic experiences (such as ‘near misses’, injury or death), critical incident stress debriefing and counseling is to be provided.

Health and safety issues identified at fire debriefings are to be addressed as appropriate.

4.4 Funding of Rural Fire Activities

Costs associated with the management and operation of the territorial area will be provided by the Council as an annual budget item, with provision for amendment as a result of unforeseen circumstances, or increase in rural fire occurrence.

The base operating costs of rural fire resources is the responsibility of the Waipa District Council with the exception of any resources provided under item 4.4.1 below

4.4.1 Landholder Provided Rural Fire Resources:

Waipa District Council recognises that the costs of provision, operation and maintenance of any fire management and fire control resources or fire protection works (such as firebreaks, water supplies, aircraft facilities, access etc.), that any landholder within the territorial area may provide for the protection of their own property or assets will be borne by the landholder(s) concerned.

4.5 Charging for Services

A charge will be made for services provided by the Fire Authority where this is deemed to be appropriate in accordance with the provisions of the Waikato Regional Rural Fire Committee Memorandum of Understanding Between Fire Authorities.

4.6 Cost Recovery and Prosecution

Waipa District Council may initiate prosecution where there is clear evidence of negligence with respect to breach of fire permit conditions or where there is deliberate contravention of the provisions of the forest and rural fires legislation.

- (a) In the first instance attempts will be made to recover any costs for fire suppression from the perpetrator of the fire. If this is not successful or the perpetrator of the fire can not be identified, then procedures as per (b) below take place.
- (b) Costs for fires will be claimed against the Rural Fire Fighting Fund by the Fire Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Service Act 1975.
- (c) Landholders retain the right and are free to make their own claims from their insurers for their costs that are not recovered through the due process of civil action or that are not recovered by the Fire Authority.

4.7 Fire Investigations

All fires will be investigated by Council Rural Fire Officers or by a contracted investigator as required to determine probable cause and liability. The Fire Investigation Form will be used for all fires that may result in a claim on the Rural Fire Fighting Fund, or for fires that result in a reimbursement of suppression costs.

Council will endeavour to recover all fire suppression costs for all fires where liability can be determined pursuant to Section 43 Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, or impose a levy pursuant to Section 46 when appropriate.

The Principal Rural Fire Officer may initiate prosecution action for cost recovery or for offences as required.

4.8 Post Fire Investigations [Cause]

The following actions must be undertaken after attendance at a fire call/incident:

- Within 10 days, complete a *Fire Incident Report Form* for all fires, burn offs, and smoke investigations.
- Within 10 days, of any large fire conduct an operational critique on actions taken at the fire scene. Details must be taken on any fire that may lead to legal proceedings.
- Within 28 days, initiate action to recover fire costs from National Rural Fire Authority Fund, person responsible, or charges for assistance given to another authority.
- Within 28 days ensure payment of personnel, and contractors, or other authorities utilised for assistance is initiated. [*Refer Regulation 46(2)(d)*]

4.9 Operational Debriefs [at Incident]

Waipa District Council will undertake structured operational debriefs of all fire incidents using the format and procedures developed by the National Rural Fire Authority.

[*Refer Regulation 46(2)(c)*]

4.10 Operational Critiques [Investigation]

Waipa District Council is committed to continuously improving performance and service to the public in Waipa District, as such, the Emergency Management Office (within Council policy) will implement all recommendations arising from structured critiques of fire incidents. Critiques of fires will also consider the cost effectiveness of operations, particularly those where a claim may be made on the Rural Fire Fighting fund.

Operational critiques (sometimes referred to as debriefs) should be conducted within 10 days of significant events, i.e. fires involving 5 or more appliances/trailer units, more than 2 hours to suppress, or 2 or more Fire Authorities.

A format for conducting an operational critique is included as Annex 10.

4.11 Operational Reviews [Full Audit]

Waipa District Rural Fire Authority is committed to maintaining effective and efficient fire suppression operations by carrying out audits.

The criteria for conducting an incident audit (additional to any operational critique) are:

- All responses to Civil Defence Emergencies by Rural Fire Authority resources;
- Incidents causing significant loss to a community, e.g. property, heritage, environmental, or financial;

- When determined as appropriate by the Principal Rural Fire Officer or Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer; or
- When the Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer considers that the outcome of such an audit will benefit the wider Region.

The audit shall be conducted by a team comprised of a minimum of three members drawn from:

- Experienced RFA Officer;
- Senior Fire Service Officer; and
- Experienced Rural Fire Manager from another organisation.

The audit team shall work within the terms of reference produced by the person requesting the audit. The audit team shall produce a report that contains the following elements and is compatible with the format being developed by the National Rural Fire Authority:

- Incident overview;
- Executive summary;
- Fire ground operations;
- Associated costs;
- Safety aspects;
- Accidents & injuries;
- Fire cause investigation issues;
- Environmental issues;
- Other issues arising;
- Conclusions; and
- Recommendations.

[Refer Regulation 46(2)(b)]

APPENDIX 3:

