

Take care in the country – fire danger highlighted

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Scottish Natural Heritage have both offered timely advice to help anyone visiting the countryside (or the Braids or Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh where there have reportedly been fire incidents over the weekend).



Arthur's Seat Photo by John Knox

SFRS explain that wildfires are very dangerous and advise that you phone 999 immediately if you see a fire however small. They are most concerned about homeowners who might live in an area where they need to have an escape plan in the event of a wildfire. One of the points they make is equally applicable to those out enjoying the countryside. If you are lighting an outdoor fire then avoid doing so when there are strong winds or high temperatures. Make sure that any recreational fires are made in a fire-safe pit or container and completely extinguished before leaving.

Mark Wrightham, SNH's Recreation & Tourism Manager, said: "It's great news that the recent warm, dry weather is encouraging more people to get out and about and enjoy our beautiful Scottish countryside. But it's important to bear in mind that fires can spread quickly in these conditions and do lasting damage to nature and wildlife.

"In this weather, we advise people to be careful when lighting fires, or consider using a camping stove instead. Be particularly cautious when disposing of cigarettes – even a cigarette butt can easily start a wildfire.

"One of the biggest risks is disposable barbecues. These should be taken away and disposed of safely in a bin. You may think the barbecue's no longer a risk, but the lingering heat could cause vegetation to smoulder and catch fire.

"A few simple tips can make all the difference in making sure as many people as possible can enjoy our countryside safely."

SNH's advice is:

- *Whenever possible, use a stove rather than light an open fire. If you do light one, keep it small and under control, and remove all traces before leaving. Avoid lighting them during prolonged dry periods or in forests, woods, farmland, peaty ground or near to buildings as fires that get out of control can cause major damage.*
- *When using a disposable barbeque, put it on a heat-proof surface, such as sand or stones before you light it. Make sure the barbeque is cold before you take it away with the rest of your rubbish.*
- *Dispose of cigarette butts in bins.*

More advice is available from the Scottish Outdoor Access Code at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com