

CIRCULAR

To all forest owners in receipt of afforestation grant/premia payments
To all registered foresters
To all Forestry Companies

Re: Procedure for reporting fire damage to forest plantations

In the spring of 2010 and 2011 significant damage was caused to the national forest estate as a result of wildfires. Many forest owners incurred considerable losses as a result of these fires which destroyed valuable timber resources.

Obligation of Forest Owners

Beneficiaries of afforestation grants and premiums are obliged to maintain and protect their forest for a period of up to 20 years from the date the grant was paid. This means that there is an obligation on the beneficiary to replant where the forest is damaged by fire.

Failure to adequately protect and maintain a grant aided forest can result in cessation of premium payment and may, ultimately, result in recoupment of all grant and premium monies received, unless remedial work is satisfactorily carried out.

If your forest is damaged by fire you must follow the procedures set out below.

1. Submit a **Reconstitution Notification Form 1: Application for Approval** form as quickly as possible. This form is used (i) to inform the Department that the forest has been damaged (ii) to provide details of the work required to reconstitute (replant) the site and (iii) to obtain the approval of the Forest Service to carry out the proposed reconstitution works. The forest owner completes pages 1 and 2 of the form, while pages 3 and 4 must be completed by a Forester. A map of the site clearly identifying the damaged area, along with any proposed changes in species, prepared and signed by the Forester, must accompany the Form 1.

Note: Forestry premium payments may be suspended until the reconstitution works have been completed, depending on the extent of the damage.

If the plan is acceptable to the Forest Service, the forest owner will be notified in writing to proceed with the reconstitution works.

2. When the reconstitution works have been completed, a **Form 2: Reconstitution Notification Form** should be submitted to the Department. The forest owner completes pages 1, 2 and 3 of the form, while pages 4 and 5 must be completed by a Forester. A certified Species Map, prepared and signed by the Forester, must accompany the Form 2.
3. The forest will be liable for further inspection by the Department 4 years after the reconstitution works are completed and a **Form 3: Reconstitution Notification Form** will be posted to the forest owner for completion and return, in advance of the inspection.

The Forest Service strongly recommends that the following cost effective steps should be implemented in order to address the risk of fire damage to your forest:

- ❖ **Consider the financial consequences of fire damage – it is the responsibility of each forest owner to ensure that adequate insurance, including for reconstitution costs, is in place**
- ❖ **Firebreaks should be well maintained and checked at least once a year**
- ❖ **Have a Fire Plan and review it regularly – list key contact numbers and discuss procedures with family members**
- ❖ **Raise awareness with your neighbours so that people are not careless in the vicinity of the forest – make sure they are aware of the legal ban on the burning of growing vegetation on uncultivated land between 1 March and 31 August each year**
- ❖ **Landowners who set fires to burn vegetation are obliged to give you (and the Gardaí) written notice if they intend to burn within a mile of your forest and you are entitled to object by counter notice (within three days)**
- ❖ **Take responsibility by reporting any suspicious activity to the Gardaí**

The prompt reporting of forest fires is essential and for this purpose a dedicated email address report.fires@agriculture.gov.ie has been allocated. You can also report fires during normal working hours by phoning lo-call number 1890 200 509 or in writing to Forestry Division (Forest fires), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Any information submitted will be treated in the strictest confidence. However, it should be noted that the Department is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts.

For further information regarding forest fires log on to <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/forests/landandforestfires/>

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