



### **Update for residents affected by the Pigeon Valley Fire Newsletter #6 Thursday, 14 February**

This newsletter provides an update on the management of the Pigeon Valley fire as well as information that you might find helpful following the evacuation from, and subsequent re-entry to your home.

#### **Civil Defence Emergency extended**

The Civil Defence Emergency has been extended until 20 February 2019. This will enable the emergency efforts to continue to be well resourced with support from all agencies and central government.

#### **Prime Minister visits today**

The Prime Minister and Ministers of Civil Defence and Agriculture visited the region today. They called into the Richmond Emergency Operation Centre before going out to Eves Valley Sawmill and Pigeon Valley Road. Before departing, the Prime Minister and Ministers visited Wakefield School, currently operating from the Hope Community Church, much to the delight of students and staff.

#### **Re-entry developments**

Work continued today to assess the possibility of conditional re-entry to the remaining evacuated areas. The planning and assessment of this is a complex process.

Around 40 additional properties in the fire-affected valleys have today been approved for conditional re-entry from 8am tomorrow (Friday) morning.

There are now only 94 properties remaining evacuated, however returning residents must be prepared to leave their homes if the situation changes.

We are working at pace to get people back into their homes, residents from the remaining 94 properties should plan on being away from home until at least the end of this weekend, and possibly longer.

An updated map will be provided on the Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Emergency Management website.

**Reminder: If you see smoke or fire, call 111 immediately.**



Factors that need to be considered and balanced include:

- Current weather forecast
- Fire Behaviour
- Availability of emergency personnel
- The condition of infrastructure within the fire damaged areas
- Geotechnical risks due to fire damage
- Damage around driveways affecting access to properties

The time it would take to evacuate the area versus the predicted speed the fire could spread is also a crucial consideration.

We appreciate people are extremely keen to get home but the situation is ever-changing and safety must come first.

For those who are re-entering their homes, now is a good time to take photos and call your insurance company to lodge a claim.

#### **Animal welfare**

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is the lead agency for animal welfare in emergencies.

For those with 'restricted access' to their properties who need help with moving stock or want to talk about stock welfare please get in touch with any of the [Ministry for Primary Industries](#) Animal Welfare Officers at each cordon. If an animal welfare officer is not there at the time, those staffing the cordon will have contact details for the officer covering your area, otherwise call us on 0800 008 333 option 4.

Where needed and where we can, our officers and vets are going back to properties to assess concerns for those residents and arrange resources, ie water, extra feed and assisting with the movement of stock to alternative grazing.

Further information is available on MPI's website

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/adverse-events/tasman-district-fires-2019/>

Federated Farmers feed line is distributing feed that has been donated. Anyone affected by fires and needing feed for animals can register for this help: Phone 0800 327 646 option 2. Availability is dependent on donations. Priority will be given to farms who rely on farm income for their living and have been affected by fire.

Call MPI on 0800 008 333 (option 4) to log any animal welfare concerns. We have now been in contact with everybody who has contacted us to lodge animal welfare concerns.

It's obviously still a very stressful time for those who cannot yet return home, and we urge people to access the support available. This includes the Rural Support Trust, the Federated Farmer's Feedline and NAIT.

You can also contact Rural Support Trust: for a free, confidential chat on 0800 787 254.

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**The following information relates to specific areas affected by the fire.**

**Pigeon Valley residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

There are no changes to access for evacuated residents in Pigeon Valley, who are currently on restricted access to their properties.

As at 8am today, Police lifted a cordon allowing residents of about 74 properties in **South Pigeon Valley** to return home to live on a 'conditional re-entry' basis. This means residents must be prepared to evacuate again at short notice should the fire risk become too high.

Residents at the **Wakefield end of Pigeon Valley Road on the south branch of Pigeon Valley Road**, can now return to their homes on a conditional basis - again, these residents must be prepared to evacuate again at short notice should the fire risk become too high.

The **north branch of Pigeon Valley Road** is still cordoned off at the intersection with the south branch of Pigeon Valley Road. We will attempt to make further opportunities available for residents to return home as long as it remains safe to do so.

Starting on the morning of Friday 15th **normal School Bus runs will resume in Pigeon Valley South and the Lower section of Pigeon Valley** for all schools. Normal pickup points and times will apply.

**Eves Valley residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

Residents up to (and including) the Eves Valley Road sawmill can return for conditional re-entry. This is approximately 10 properties and does not include numbers 209a and 210. Three properties on Waimea Road West - 371, 377 and 381 will also be allowed access.

Temporary daytime access has also been extended by four hours to residents of Eves Valley. This means residents can now **enter their properties from 8am to 2pm each day**. We hope this gives residents more time to tend to their properties. We will attempt to make further opportunities available for residents to return home as long as it remains safe to do so.

**Teapot Valley residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

Temporary daytime access has also been extended by four hours to residents of Teapot Valley. This means residents can now **enter their properties from 8am to 2pm each day**. We hope this gives residents more time to tend to their properties. We will attempt to make further opportunities available for residents to return home as long as it remains safe to do so.

**Golden Hills residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

All 18 properties previously within the cordon area on Golden Hills Road have been cleared for conditional re-entry.

Temporary daytime access has also been extended by four hours to residents of Golden Hills. This means residents can now **enter their properties from 8am to 2pm each day**. We hope this gives

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residents more time to tend to their properties. We will attempt to make further opportunities available for residents to return home as long as it remains safe to do so.

**Redwood Valley residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

The cordon has been moved approximately 500m, allowing eight properties to be re-entered.

The fire conditions in Redwood Valley are still too volatile and potentially dangerous. We are aware of unstable trees near houses, for example. Therefore, the **10am to 12 noon time limit remains until further notice**. We will attempt to make further opportunities available for residents to return home as long as it remains safe to do so.

**Wakefield residents:**

**Updated: 8am on Friday 15 February**

All Wakefield residents can return home but must remain prepared to evacuate at short notice due to the extreme fire risk for the whole region.

Wakefield Health Centre and Wakefield Pharmacy have now resumed normal hours of operation.

**Remember:** if you are required to leave your home again, or you choose to self-evacuate, it is really important that you register with Civil Defence. You can either go to the Civil Defence Centre at the New Life Church, 85 Wensley Road, Richmond between 8am - 5pm, or phone 03 543 8400.

**Fire update**

Overnight Fire and Emergency New Zealand crews continued to tackle hot spots and flare ups across the valleys. Some flare ups in Teapot and Pigeon Valleys proved challenging for crews to fully extinguish due to wind gusts of up to 25km/hr at times. Today, fire crews continued to focus their efforts on tackling the 250 hotspots and identifying any new hotspots as they occur. The hotspots on the south eastern perimeter required considerable effort to ensure the area is cleared. Crews also worked on securing containment lines and assessing dangerous trees, some of which have self-felled after damage suffered to their root-network due to the fire.

Fire and Emergency New Zealand crews are likely to remain for some weeks, within the fire area. Today we have around 150 personnel on the ground, 8 helicopters and 4 drones in the air and 9 heavy machines (excavators and dozers).

The current fire perimeter is sitting around 35km, covering around 2330 ha.

Please remember there is a total fire ban in place throughout the region.

**Weather forecast**

The outlook for Friday is for a few showers before dawn, then becoming fine for the rest of the day. Winds will ease during the morning and change from southwest to northeast 10 to 15 km/h tomorrow afternoon. Temperatures will begin around 17C and rise to 23-25C in the afternoon.

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### **Community meetings**

A Community meeting was held at the Hope Community Church last night (Wednesday) and was very well attended. If you missed the meeting you can view the footage on our Facebook page. We will let you know of any further community meetings.

### **Health and wellbeing advice**

Coping with stress and anxiety: Anxiety is very common during an emergency event such as an uncontrolled fire. This is a normal response to a very stressful situation. Talking to people and helping others can be both therapeutic and useful.

Getting a good night's sleep is also important. There are good tips on this website:

<https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/healthy-living/sleep/sleep-tips/>

**Health navigators:** For help getting healthcare, Nelson Bays Primary Health health navigators are available to help connect you to health services

- Local support (8am - 5pm): 0800 627 401
- Email [healthsupport@nbph.org.nz](mailto:healthsupport@nbph.org.nz)
- If you need help accessing a GP please contact Sally.Tohill@nbph.org.nz PH: 03-5437841
- Healthline (24 hours): 0800 611 116
- Free-call or text 1737 to talk to a trained counsellor
- in an emergency, call 111

Please refer to the Nelson Marlborough Health website for advice about smoke exposure, helping children to cope and more.

<https://www.nmdhb.govt.nz/nmdhb-news-and-notice/pigeon-valley-forest-fire-update/>

### **Financial Assistance**

You and your family may be able to get a Civil Defence payment. Work and Income may be able to help cover the costs of urgent or unexpected costs (e.g. petrol, food, urgent living expenses, etc.) They are also able to provide help with accommodation costs when people are staying with friends or family.

Other help such as benefits and housing assistance may also be available. Contact Work & Income on 0800 779 997 if you would like help, aren't sure if you can get help, are struggling to support yourself or your family or would like more information.

More information on who and what help you can get is available on the Work and Income Civil Defence webpage : [www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-zbenefits/civil-defence-payment.html](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-zbenefits/civil-defence-payment.html)

### **Drinking water contamination information**

If you are on a Tasman District Council (TDC) reticulated water supply, and are returning to evacuated areas, the Wakefield, Redwood and Hope/Brightwater reticulated water supplies are all currently operational.

If you are on a roof water tank supply, any ash and debris that may have been deposited on your roof from the fire should be removed, and the first flush of water following the next rainfall should

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not be collected. Reconnection of the tank should only occur after the roof area has been checked and cleared.

If material has been washed into the tank in sufficient quantities to affect smell, taste or appearance of rainwater, do not drink the water.

Rainwater in tanks that have not been affected by ash and debris, and has no taint or odour can still be used for normal purposes.

You can visit [www.tasman.govt.nz](http://www.tasman.govt.nz) for more information on water supply, quality and testing.

**Contact details and where to find the most up to date information about the fires, evacuation and the emergency response:**

- The Nelson Tasman Civil Defence website: [www.nelsontasmancivildefence.co.nz/news](http://www.nelsontasmancivildefence.co.nz/news)
- The Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/nelsontasmancivildefenceandemergencymanagement>
- The NZTA traffic pages (for information about road closures): <http://www.journeys.nzta.govt.nz/traffic/regions/10>
- Brian FM is broadcasting Civil Defence information: 106.2 FM
- Parents are advised by the Ministry of Education to stay in touch with your child's school, via the school website or Facebook page. Please check for any changes to the normal routine and bus routes.
- The Ministry of Social Development can advise on financial support: 0800 779 997
- The Ministry of Primary Industries can advise on animal welfare concerns: 0800 008 333 (option 4)

**Sharing this update**

Civil Defence is here to help, if you think there are other topics we need to cover in this newsletter let us know.

Hard copies of this newsletter will be available at the Tasman District Council Customer Service Centre and at each end of the Wakefield cordons.

If you have family or friends that cannot access a computer, please share this information with them. Remember, it is ok to ask for help. If you need help and you're not sure who to ask, call Tasman District Council on 03 543 8400 (24 Hours).

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