

Information and updates for residents affected by the Pigeon Valley Fire, from Nelson Tasman Civil Defence and our fire response partners



Fire Update

A pilot is in hospital with minor injuries after a helicopter crashed during firefighting operations this afternoon. Our thoughts are with the pilot and his family. Air operations were suspended immediately after the crash but have since resumed. Welfare support is being provided to those affected. You can watch the livestream of the media briefing [here](#).

Fire and Emergency has had around 150 personnel on the fireground today as well as around 50 support staff. The fire is still estimated to cover around 2300ha with a perimeter of 35.4km.

Accessing your property

Evacuated residents will be advised by text message in the usual way tomorrow morning whether and when there will be restricted access to your properties tomorrow. Due to the forecast high fire risk overnight, we're not making a projection about that tonight.

If you're interested in finding out more about how the decision is made, and who is involved in making it, read on.

There is a dedicated cordon access team working within the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at Richmond, all focused on the arrangements to enable residents to have access to their properties.

The team usually has at least five members, including civil defence, Fire and Emergency and Police personnel. Team manager James Thompson says that their mission is to enable and coordinate safe access for residents. This includes both the daily restricted visits for a few hours, and also conditional re-entry, which allows people to return to their homes overnight while still being prepared to evacuate at short notice if need be.

Safe entry has to be based on many factors. In brief, this includes an evaluation of fire behaviour, the weather, the risks associated with burned areas, and the ability to get people out quickly and safely without endangering others – including emergency services and Defence Force personnel.

James Thompson says these factors change frequently so the decision-making is always complex. "It's usually an evolving situation so we don't make promises ahead of time about whether people will be able to get access or not on any particular day."

Do we have your details?

If you've registered with Civil Defence and given us your cellphone number then you should be receiving text messages from us about restricted access to your property, the availability of information (like this newsletter) and other matters. This will increase as we move towards the transition from emergency response to recovery. Please let us know if you are not getting these texts – phone 03 543 8400 (24 Hours).

Progress for Pigeon Valley

Today another 14 households from Pigeon Valley were able to return home under the conditional re-entry programme. This means they are able to stay at home all day and overnight if they wish, as long as they are ready and able to evacuate again at short notice if the situation changes for the worse.

This leaves 83 households with 230 people still evacuated. Another 1277 properties and 3558 people are in the yellow “prepare to evacuate” zone – this number includes Wakefield.

Community meeting update

About 60 people attended the community meeting and drop-in session at the Hope Community Church and had the chance to discuss their own circumstances with representatives from FENZ, Police, MPI, MSD and NMDHB. Thanks again to the Hope Community Church for their hospitality and willingness to host the meetings. If you missed it, the video of the presentations on our facebook page is [here](#).

We will let you know when the next community meeting will be.

Looking further ahead

You may have picked up from the weather forecast that New Zealand may be affected by Tropical Cyclone Oma, which is currently off Vanuatu. This is also in our sights and we have begun contingency planning in case the winds and rain have an impact in this area. Those plans are in the early stages but we want to let you know that we are keeping a close eye on the situation.

Update from Ministry for Primary Industries

Valley residents can call MPI on 0800 008 333 (option 4) if you have identified animal welfare concerns during your daily visits to your property.

During restricted access hours, please ensure you provide your animals with enough food and water for at least 2-3 days in the event you cannot get back to your animals.

If you have to re-evacuate

If you have to evacuate, take your pets with you – if you can do so safely – or take them to a safe shelter place.

Pets can be taken to the Richmond Showgrounds if you are unable to find alternative accommodation for them. You can leave your pets with the team there – who will care for them until you’re able to either return home or make other arrangements for them.

Please do not leave pets in cars for extended periods. If you go to the Civil Defence Centre at Richmond New Life Church, you can take your pets with you as long as cats are in a cage and dogs are on leads. If you go to a Marae, please ensure your pets have already been taken to either the showgrounds or to friends, family, whānau, or boarding facilities. Local Marae aren’t equipped to cater for an influx of animals and wish to ensure they are well looked after.

If you have to leave your animals behind, make sure they’re in a safe place, well away from any fire risk, such as a recently ploughed paddock.

Safer areas should be away from dense vegetation, scrub, bush or forest - anything that will fuel a fire. Safer areas should be fenced, have water supply, short pasture, and protection from radiant heat.

Ensure that any livestock left on your property have sufficient food and water for 2-3 days and that they have freedom to move to water.

More information

We are posting the latest information and updates on the Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Facebook page www.facebook.com/nelsontasmancivildefenceandemergencymanagement this includes livestreaming the community meetings and sharing information from Fire and Emergency, MPI and other partner organisations. You might like to “follow” us so our posts are more likely to pop up in your newsfeed.

Our updates are also online at www.nelsontasmancivildefence.co.nz/