



## **Update for residents affected by the Pigeon Valley Fire Newsletter #2 Sunday, 10 February**

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

### **Fire update.**

Current fire activity -

Fighting the fire today are:

- 23 helicopters
- 3 fixed wing planes
- 155 firefighters
- 36 Incident Management staff
- plus heavy machines (excavators and dozers).

This morning Fire and Emergency crews began a controlled burn off as a method of fire suppression. It will create a fire break 2.5 km long and 50m wide at the northern perimeter of the fire at the head of Redwood Valley, above Heines, Johnsons, and Cut Hill Roads.

This is a method used in New Zealand and internationally to suppress large vegetation fires to starve the fire of fuel to create a firebreak. It is being carried out by highly experienced operators after careful analysis of predicted and actual fire conditions (weather and environment), and after rigorous risk assessment and analysis.

### **Community meetings**

There will be two community meetings for evacuees tomorrow evening (Monday):

5.30pm at the Appleby School

7.30pm at the Hope Community Church, Ranzau Road in Hope.

We encourage you to attend one of these meetings for updates on the latest news and key information from representatives across a number of agencies. We also aim to livestream both these meetings on the Nelson Tasman Civil Defence Facebook page for those who can't attend:

[www.facebook.com/nelsontasmancivildefenceandemergencymanagement](https://www.facebook.com/nelsontasmancivildefenceandemergencymanagement) You can watch this live or later at your convenience.

### **Getting you back home**

Your safety is of prime importance. We will get you back to your home as soon as possible, but it needs to be safe to do so. It will take some time yet before this can happen. We appreciate you may be feeling frustrated and concerned about your property, possessions or pets. Because of the dynamic nature of the fire it is only considered safe for some people to return to their properties for short periods. We will let you know by text if there is an opportunity for you to access your home or property under a managed access visit.

Today we undertook four restricted residential access programmes to Valley communities. A huge thank you to the communities for their support and cooperation. General feedback was positive with residents relieved that there were no significant issues with their properties.

There were some challenges with the Pigeon Valley programme given the dynamic nature of the fire at the location. We are aiming to have a smoother process when there is another opportunity for access.

We understand it's frustrating not knowing when you may be able to return home, even for a short time. There is currently no one-off access possible for residents to return to properties in Wakefield. This is because of the ongoing risk presented by the fire and local wind conditions but the Police are making regular patrols to reassure residents that their properties are safe.

We are working through some options to offer Wakefield residents restricted access, however this will depend on the availability of resources and the behaviour of the fire. If it becomes possible, we will alert Wakefield residents by text message so please ensure you have registered either by



visiting the civil defence centre at the Saxton Pavilion or by phoning 03 5438400.

### **Access for Rural Wakefield residents**

The escorted convoys on SH6 through Wakefield will begin earlier and finish later from tomorrow, to help people living in the rural areas impacted by the cordons getting to and from work and school. The convoys will begin at 6am and end at 7pm.

### **Animal Welfare**

Today Ministry for Primary Industries and their specialist teams entered Pigeon Valley for the first time in several days. Fortunately the fire had not reached any grazing areas, or any animals. They also had assisted access to parts of Teapot Valley, Eves Valley and Redwood Valley. Approximately 100 sheep were evacuated from Eves Valley. Their teams fed and watered as many animals as they could in these areas.

This afternoon they assisted with emergency evacuations in Wakefield for high priority animals and their teams are on stand-by to assist with any further evacuations. Where possible, animals are being tended to in place, which is less stressful for them.

More than 300 animals are now being cared for at the Showgrounds, where there is housing, food and water. Animals of any size can be brought directly to the Showgrounds to be looked after by the amazing team of volunteers.

People have been visiting the showgrounds to look at the animals. This can be a hindrance for the teams looking after animals and moving animals onto the site. If you don't have anything to do with the animals, please stay away.

Anyone worried about animals in the fire affected area, or anybody looking to volunteer, should phone MPI on 0800 008 333 (option 4). Staff are processing these calls as fast as they can allocate available crews to accompany animal welfare teams to check on properties.

If you have contacted the MPI 0800 number and left a message they will return your call as quickly as they can, with more people. We are dealing with a large number of calls and have put more people on our phones to answer and make calls.

### **Keeping yourself well**

Personal hygiene is even more important when people are living in close quarters, in order to avoid illness like gastro enteritis. At the end of this newsletter we have shared advice from Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service to help you keep well.

People with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema or other lung disease are at greatest risk from smoke inhalation. Those with angina or other heart disease might also be more affected.

See the [Nelson Marlborough Health website](#) for smoke exposure advice and who to call if you feel unwell.

This page also has some great advice on coping with stress and anxiety, sleep tips, helping explain to children what is going on and how to support your mental wellbeing.

**Free GP visits and pharmacy prescriptions:** The usual fees for GP visits and pharmacy prescriptions will be waived for fire-related appointments.

**Personal wellbeing:** If you are finding things overwhelming please contact your GP who will assist you to get free, confidential help from with a certified counsellor or psychologist.

If you need help accessing a GP please contact Sally.Tohill@nbph.org.nz PH: 03-5437841

You can also call Healthline 24/7 on 0800 611 116

Nelson Bays Primary Health are also here to help you. [www.nbph.org.nz](http://www.nbph.org.nz)

### **Weather forecast.**

No rainfall is predicted for the next couple of days. Today (Sunday) the wind started off from the South West, changing to the North East during the day. It is expected to slowly build from 15 km/h to around 25km/h, with gusts up to 50kms/h. The wind direction, gusty conditions and low humidity while taken into account when planning they certainly do not help our front line fire fighters.

On Monday the temperature is expected to rise, with gusty winds in the afternoon.

### **Have you registered?**

Whether you are asked to leave your home or you self-evacuate, it is really important that you register with Civil Defence.



**You can either go to the Civil Defence Centre at Saxton Stadium at Saxton Field, Stoke or phone 03 543 8400.**

They can help you with accommodation and let you what other assistance might be available. This includes:

- Civil Defence payments from Work and Income. You can also contact them on 0800 559 009 to discuss this.
- Assistance with animals – contact MPI on 0800 008 333 - option 4
- Free GP visits if you are finding things overwhelming.

### **Protecting your personal property**

We know the security of evacuated properties is a concern to all those who have had to leave please be assured Police are managing the cordons with support from the NZ Defence Force. They are monitoring the area regularly to ensure there aren't people in the area that shouldn't be there.

### **Where to get help if you need it**

**Rural Support Trust:** for a free, confidential chat call 0800 787 254.

**Insurance:** When you return to your property take photos and call your insurance company to log a claim.

**Water:** If you are on a roof water supply and a lot of ash is falling on your roof, it might be best to disconnect the pipe to the tank, and only reconnect it after the next heavy rain (discarding the 'first flush'), to avoid getting ash in your water supply. [www.tasman.govt.nz](http://www.tasman.govt.nz) has information on water supply quality and testing.

**Animal welfare:** The Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) has advised that current smoke levels are not considered unsafe, however if you have a pet or livestock in distress, contact your usual veterinarian or the MPI Animal Welfare Emergency Response team on 0800 008 333 – option 4 or email: [awem@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:awem@mpi.govt.nz).

**AirBnB** have provided another accommodation option where a number of local providers are offering free stays to evacuees. By going to the AirBnB website through the link below evacuated people can find suitable accommodation.

<http://airbnb.com/tasmanfire>



**Contact details and where to find the most up to date information about the fires, 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 559 009
- 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're other topics we need to cover in this newsletter let us know.

Hardcopies of this newsletter will be available at the Tasman District Council Customer Service Centre and at each end of the Wakefield cordon.

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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22 Queen Street  
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To: NMDHB Communications Manager, Stephanie Gray



## Important Public Health Message

Pigeon Valley Fire

Date: 10/02/2019

### **Public Health Personal Hygiene Message**

- Good personal hygiene, to avoid outbreaks of gastroenteritis, is essential at all times but is especially important when people are living in a shared environment.
- Gastroenteritis may be **highly** infectious and causes vomiting and/or diarrhoea

### **Preventing Gastroenteritis**

- Always clean (wash/sanitise) hands before preparing food and after using the toilet.
- If someone has gastroenteritis they can still pass the disease onto others for up to 48 hours after their symptoms have stopped

### **Hand cleaning:**

- conventional hand washing (soap and water) for 20 seconds followed by hand drying for 20 seconds, **or** alcohol GEL sanitiser (no water required)

### **Contact:**

**Dr William Rainger**

**Medical Officer of Health**