



Update for residents affected by the Pigeon Valley Fire Newsletter #7 Friday, 15 February

Re-entry developments

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

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.

Our specialist teams are continuing the risk assessment checks for each property. More details will be available soon. We appreciate people are extremely keen to get home but the situation is ever-changing and safety must come first.

While we are working at pace to get people back into their homes, residents who remain evacuated should plan on being away from home until at least Wednesday 20th February 2019, and possibly longer.

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 if necessary.

The following information relates to specific areas affected by the fire:

Pigeon Valley residents:

As at 7:30am 16 February 2019 this has changed. No access will be granted today due to high risk fire conditions.

At 8:00am tomorrow, Saturday 16 February, Police will lift a cordon on the remainder of Pigeon Valley Road and Sharp Road, allowing residents of the remaining 14 properties to return home 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.

Yesterday around 74 properties in **south Pigeon Valley** returned home on a 'conditional re-entry' basis. This means residents must remain 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**, also returned to their homes yesterday on a conditional basis - but again, these residents must be prepared to evacuate again at short notice should the fire risk become too high.



Normal School Bus runs resumed in Pigeon South and the Lower section of Pigeon Valley this morning for all schools.

Eves Valley, Teapot Valley, Golden Hills residents:

Temporary daytime access the above area residents continues to be extended by four hours. 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.

It is important to note that depending on weather conditions tomorrow morning, access to properties between 8am - 2pm on Saturday 16 February may be cancelled. If there is any change you will receive a text alert, or be notified at the cordon.

Redwood Valley residents:

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.

It is important to note that depending on weather conditions tomorrow morning, access to Redwood Valley properties between 10am - 12 noon on Saturday 16 February may be cancelled. If there is any change you will receive a text alert, or be notified at the cordon.

Wakefield residents:

All Wakefield residents who return home 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 10am - 4pm on Saturday and Sunday, or phone 03 543 8400**.

Fire update

It was a quiet night last night with little or no wind on the fireground. This allowed firefighters to contain small flare ups very quickly. While the fire remains active it has been significantly reduced.

Today the 130 firefighters and 9 helicopters have continued to focus on the hotspots close to the southern and north-western perimeter of the fire. Trees affected by the fire that have a risk of self-felling continue to be a concern and 16 specialist assessors are on the ground today to address this issue. This is likely to take some time to due to the high risk involved in felling the fire-damaged



trees. Machinery will be used in some instances as it is too dangerous for many trees to be felled manually.

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.

We're watching the weather very carefully

Civil Defence teams and Fire and Emergency New Zealand are monitoring a comprehensive set of weather resources to inform management of the fire response.

We're using information from three weather stations, our teams of field observers on the fire ground, NIWA and independent meteorologists to help inform our approach

As the temperature rises during the day, and any changes in wind direction or intensity, increase the potential for flare ups or changes to the fire area. By keeping a close eye on the weather conditions we can make sure we have our fire crews in the right places to respond

Weather forecast

Tomorrow's weather will result in some challenging conditions for fire fighters. The outlook for Saturday is fine with high temperatures in the mid to high 20s and low humidity. Southwest winds will change to northwest in the afternoon with gusts of up to 55km/h. It's important to note that the dynamic wind conditions, and the remaining tree foliage in Teapot Valley and the western side of Redwood Valley presents a risk of flare-ups. This has the potential for people to see increased levels of smoke. If at any time you are concerned about this please dial 111.

Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held on **Sunday 17 February between 1:30pm - 3:30pm at the Hope Community Church**. This session will provide remaining evacuated residents with an opportunity to hear from representatives from Civil Defence and Emergency, Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the New Zealand Police, and other supporting agencies.

Drinking water contamination information

If you are on a Tasman District Council reticulated water supply, and are returning to evacuated areas, the Wakefield, Redwood valley 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 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.



Community Fire Relief Concert

On **Sunday 17 February between 4:30pm - 5:30pm at the Saxton Field**, the world famous **New Zealand Army Band**, will perform at the Richmond Rotary Club Fire Relief Concert. Entry to the concert is free and all donations collected will go towards the Tasman District Council Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund. So bring a blanket, some shade, food and drinks along with your family and friends and enjoy the music and time together.

Machinery use and exemptions

A process has been agreed to allow exemptions for contractors and businesses following the ban on use of machinery.

Forestry companies and contractors will be asked to sign a declaration confirming they would follow established operational protocols on using equipment in extreme fire risk conditions.

Exemptions will be considered only for organisations covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act. Businesses wanting to apply for an exemption, should call the Tasman District Council on 03 543 8400 (this applies to businesses in the Nelson area as well). You can find out more about this at www.nelsontasmancivildefence.co.nz/

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/>

Iwi Liaison

If you have iwi specific requests for information, support or help around the fires, please contact iwi@nelsontasmandem.govt.nz.

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
- 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.

As of Wednesday 13 February 2019, the Ministry of Social Development had processed 432 Civil Defence payments.

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

Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund

Applications for grants from the Mayoral Disaster Relief Fund will open seven days after the Civil Defence State of Emergency is lifted. The fund is intending to provide one-off relief grants to residents, property owners and business owners affected by the Pigeon Valley fire.

The grants will make a contribution and are likely to cover damage or hardship caused by the fire that are not generally covered by insurance or emergency funding, or grants or allowances from other agencies or similar sources. At this stage the criteria is still being finalised.

Yesterday afternoon the fund totalled about \$300,000, including Government contributions. Approximately \$130,000 had been donated directly by the community.

All applications must be made online, and assistance will be provided to anyone who needs help with the application process. The Tasman District Council website will have more information on criteria and applications as soon as it is finalised.

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
- 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)

Animal welfare

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is responsible for animal welfare in emergencies. We coordinate all aspects of animal welfare needs with support agencies.

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 will facilitate the support you need.

If you have to evacuate again, please take your pets with you as you leave your property – if you can do so safely. 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 – which can kill animals.

If you leave an area where you have conditional re-entry, we advise that you take your pets with you as your area is evacuated while you are away. If you have any requests for help with the welfare of your animals, please call MPI on 0800 008 333 (option 4)

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.

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.

MPI has been and will continue to work closely with the Tasman District Council, growers and farmers regarding the effects of the drought. It is also critical that stock levels on properties are appropriate to the water restrictions in place. Farmers and lifestyle block owners need to be making active destocking decisions.

**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 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).