

The Muirburn Code

- Guidance Card

Guidance for the controlled burning of heather, grass and other moorland, in Scotland



Introduction

This card provides a summary of essential information in support of *The Muirburn Code*. The Code applies to all moorland managers and includes farmers, crofters, shepherds and gamekeepers. The Code forms part of the compliance requirements for Single Farm Payments.

Points to remember:

- Notify neighbours at least 24 hours beforehand.
- Notify the fire brigade before burning and on completion, each day.
- Erect warning signs if the fires will be close to areas heavily used by the public.
- Assess the weather conditions: are they suitable for burning? The wind speed should not be too strong – normally not above Force 3 (8-12 mph).
- Decide where you will burn in the expected weather conditions. If conditions change, re-assess.
- You should not burn on your own. Carefully brief sufficient people (normally teams of 3) to carry out the planned burning programme.
- At least one person in each team should know the area well.
- No more than two fires should be lit at any one time.

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- Health and safety requirements must be met. Stout boots, fire-retardant overalls and face visors (or goggles) should be worn.
- Communications should be available (e.g. mobile phone, radio); it is good practice to have extra people on call to assist if necessary.
- A supply of drinking water and a first aid kit should be available; the water is important to reduce the risk of heat stress.
- Avoid burning near nesting birds or sensitive habitats.

Legal Requirements

- By law, burning is only allowed between:
1st October – 15th April: below 450m [1500ft] – extendable to 30th April by permission of the landowner or the Scottish Executive.
1st October – 30th April: above 450m [1500ft] – extendable to 15th May by permission of the landowner or the Scottish Executive.
- Notice in writing must be given to the owners and occupiers of adjacent land, not less than 24 hours and not more than 7 days in advance of burning.
- Burning must not start between sunset and sunrise.
- Sufficient people and equipment must be available to control the fire.
- All reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent injury or damage.
- The smoke from the fire must not cause a nuisance.

- If the fire will be within a Site of Special Scientific Interest or other designated site, you must check whether consent for burning is required from Scottish Natural Heritage. Do not burn without such consent.
- An appropriate Health & Safety Risk Assessment must be carried out before burning.

Guidance

- Several plans should be made in advance covering the areas that can be burnt with the wind in different directions. This will aid preparations on the day.
- Before starting, light a small test fire to confirm that the conditions are suitable for controlled burning.
- Fires should be 30m wide and about 150-300m long (~0.5–1.0 ha in size). The size of fire may need to be increased in large areas of long, unburnt heather, especially if grazing livestock or deer are present.
- On heather or grass moors, a mosaic of burnt and unburnt areas should be produced.
- Make sure that there are adequate firebreaks in place to stop the fire; usually these should be 4-6m wide.
- Make maximum use of natural / existing firebreaks such as tracks, watercourses etc.
- Beware of using fires from previous years as firebreaks, unless they are clean.
- Prepare any cut firebreaks carefully. If cut within 24 hours of lighting fires they are more likely to stop a fire. If cut earlier the residue may burn and carry the fire.

- Burn with the wind towards a firebreak, preferably downhill. Burning against the wind, or ‘back burning’, can be used to create firebreaks.
- Control both flanks of the fire at a desired width, leaving the fire front to move with the wind. It can be useful to have one flank defined by a natural or a prepared firebreak.
- Make sure one person stays with the fire for at least 10 minutes after it has been put out, to deal with any flare-ups.

Contact Telephone Numbers

Organisation	Name	Telephone No.
Fire Brigade		
Estate Office		
Neighbour 1		
Neighbour 2		
Neighbour 3		
Emergency Callout staff		
Others		