



Melksham Area Board Report – 24th April 2019

Camping and caravanning



Whether you're out and about in a camper van, towing your caravan or sleeping under canvas for your holidays, venturing into the great outdoors can carry risks.

When you're on a campsite, make sure there's at least six metres (20ft) between caravans and/or tents and that you're away from parked cars – this will reduce the risk of any fire spreading. If mobile phone signal is poor, make sure you know where the nearest payphone is.

Never use barbecues inside or near the entrance to your tent or caravan, either for cooking or as a heat source – the carbon monoxide they produce is lethal.

Camping

A fire can destroy a tent in just a minute, so make sure you:

- Never use candles in or near the tent – torches are safer.
- Keep cooking stoves and barbecues away from the tent walls, as they can catch light very easily.
- Know how to escape by cutting your way out of the tent, should there be a fire.
- Don't smoke inside your tent.

Caravans

- Take special care when cooking and don't leave pans unattended.
- Turn off all appliances when you go to bed.
- Never dry clothes over the stove.
- Remove any litter and rubbish near the caravan to reduce the risk of fire spreading.
- Make sure the caravan is well ventilated and never block air vents.
- If there is a fire extinguisher or fire blanket within the caravan, read the instructions so you know what to do in the event of fire.
- Keep flammable liquids, such as petrol and gas cylinders, outside and away from children.



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- Make sure the gas pipe connection is secure. If you suspect a leak, turn off the main cylinder valve.

Heath fires and countryside safety



When you are out and about enjoying the countryside, there are some things you can do in order to protect our beautiful surroundings and keep you safe.

Large wildfires are thankfully rare but, when they do occur, they can be very serious and affect large areas of the countryside. They also take a great deal of resources to bring under control, which impacts the availability of appliances for property fires and other emergencies.

The Upton Heath fire in Dorset in 2011, for example, damaged approximately 250 acres of the heath and required the mobilisation of 30 fire engines and 11 Land Rovers.

Wildfires can ravish the local wildlife, destroying ecosystems in a matter of hours that have taken years to build up. If a wildfire encroaches upon farmland, then crops and farm buildings can be consumed, and homes that border heathland can also be at risk.

At their worst, wildfires can cause death or injury to people. A developed wildfire creates its own wind, which drives it at speeds faster than people can get out of its way.

Steps you can take to avoid starting a wildfire:

- Avoid open fires in the countryside. If you must have a fire, make sure that you're in a designated safe area.
- Put out cigarettes and other smoking materials properly before you leave your vehicle.
- Do not throw cigarette ends out of your vehicle. They could start a fire and destroy surrounding countryside.
- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodlands, as sunlight shining through the glass can cause a fire to start. Take the items home, or put them in a waste or recycling bin.



- If you see a fire in the countryside, report it immediately. Do not try to tackle a fire yourself; usually they can't be put out with a bucket of water. Please call the fire service and leave the area as soon as possible.
- Ensure that you know your location or a landmark so you can direct the fire service.

Sam's Sad Day

Sam's Sad Day is a story about a sand lizard whose home is destroyed by a wildfire. Once you have read the story, you can test the children's understanding and recall using the **Sam's Sad Day questions worksheet** (the **answer sheet** is provided).

The children can write their own story about a wild creature whose home is destroyed by a wildfire.

For other resources or ideas about fire safety for children, visit our **education section**.

Advice for landowners

Through controlled management of planting schemes and firebreaks, the risk of a wildfire starting can be reduced and the effects of a 'going' wildfire can be restricted.

Fire spreads at different rates through different vegetation so, by managing the planting, the rate of fire spread can be slowed to give fire crews extra time to get resources in place.

A **best practice guide** has been produced by the Forestry Commission, giving further information about the causes of wildfires, their behaviours and the steps that landowners can take to prevent or mitigate them.

See also:

The Natural England website – **www.naturalengland.org.uk** – has lots of information, including an explanation of the **Countryside Code**.

Find out more about being a **Firewise Community** through the Urban Heaths Partnership.



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Water safety



Cooling off in rivers, canals, ponds, quarries and lakes can have deadly consequences.

Every year, firefighters are called to incidents where residents (particularly children and young people) get into difficulty when swimming in open water.

Dangers of cooling off in open water

The water may look calm on the surface, but there may still be strong undercurrents that could pull even a strong swimmer under.

The water may also feel relatively warm on the surface, but just a few feet below can be icy cold – even in the hot weather – and can very quickly cause severe cramp and hypothermia.

Young people often misjudge their swimming ability – they may view a river or lake as a tempting means of cooling off during a hot spell of weather, but fail to appreciate the harmful effects that the cold water can have on their stamina and strength.

Key safety tips for staying safe near water

The following are some key safety tips for staying safe near water:

- Alcohol and swimming do not mix – stay out of the water if you've been drinking.
- Always watch your child while at the beach, lake or other natural bodies of water.
- Never let older children swim in unsupervised areas like quarries, canals or ponds.
- Don't swim near motor boats, jet skis or other power vehicles.
- Never interfere with lifesaving equipment – you might need it yourself.
- Learn to spot and keep away from dangerous water.
- Take safety advice – heed notices which warn you of the danger. See [**national water safety signs**](#) for guidance.



- Children should always visit open water sites with a grown-up.
- Swimming anywhere other than at purpose built and supervised swimming pools is highly dangerous and is not recommended, unless as part of an organised club.

See also:

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – [advice on water safety](#)

Safe and Well Visits- Home safety

The Melksham area has a dedicated FRS '**Safe and Well**' advisor who can visit people, within their own homes, advising on home safety and wellbeing.

A Safe and Well visit is **FREE** and normally lasts about one hour covering topics such as:

- Using electricity safely
- Cooking safely
- Making an escape plan
- What to do if there is a fire
- Keeping children safe
- Good practice – night time routine and other points relevant to you
- Identifying and discussing any further support the occupier may need

If you have thatch property, are living alone, have a young family, are over 65 or a smoker please get in contact with us. We want to help make you safer in your own home. If you or someone you know has mobility or sight and hearing impairments, please suggest a Safe and Well visit.

Visit <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/news/new-name-new-contact-details-same-service/> to book one.

Response

Due to a system fault, incident data was not available during the preparation of this report. Details will be included for the next meeting.

Community Engagement

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service provides a free service called a Safe and Well visit. We will visit a person's home by appointment and discuss any safety issues in the home. We will also have a conversation about improving an individual's health and wellbeing.



If you or someone you know need a smoke alarm, some advice or are worried about what to do in an emergency, contact us for a free Safe and Well visit;
<http://www.dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/>

Community Safety Plan

DWFRS Community Safety Plan 2018-2022 outlines our plans for the future. It explains the diverse services we provide and how we plan to improve and deliver them over the four-year period. The plan can be found on the DWFRS website <http://www.dwfire.org.uk/community-safety-plan/>

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