RURAL FIRE AND PROTECTION CAMPAIGN

Supplement presented by The Portugal News in conjunction with Safe Communities Portugal

Why such a campaign is important

Firemen fighting a blaze between Casal dos Bernardos and Rio de Couros in Outém district on 4 August 2015. (Photo:Lusa / PauloCunha)

The Portugal News and Safe Communities Portugal are pleased to join forces to form a Rural Fire Prevention and Protection Campaign to help create awareness among the community and steps that we can all take to protect our homes, ourselves and families against rural fires.

For the last four years Safe Communities Portugal has pro duced online its Definitive Guide to Forest Fire protection, based on information provided to them by the ANPC (National Civil Protection Association) and the GNR, as well as other sources. This year we are taking it a further step forward to reflect the importance of this issue.

Last year, we saw some of the most devastating fires in our history resulting in over 100 deaths, damage and destruction of property and the environment, and over 520,000 hectares of land burned - nearly 6% of Portugal's entire land area. The losses were considerable, and as a result the government has made changes in law, as well as some new regulations, to help prevent and tackle fires in the future. Most important however, has been the clear message that the laws concerning the cleaning of land MUST be properly enforced with money provided to Councils to ensure this is done.

Given the overgrown state of the country and the lack of forestry management in many places, clearly this may not be achieved overnight, but working on a priority basis using the resources provided, much can be achieved this year.

We hope therefore that readers will find this supplement informative and helpful, as well as SCP's "Definitive Guide to Forest Fire Prevention and Land Cleaning", which will be available online on our Safe Communities Portugal website.

This supplement is aimed at creating greater awareness of what we can all do to prevent rural fires by the regular cleaning of our land. If we do not, we will destroy our environment, as well as placing lives and property at risk, not to mention those who have to deal with such incidents, sometimes on a huge scale.

safe communities portugal COMMUNICATION

Safe Communities Portugal recognised this problem shortly after it formed in 2012 and has engaged with the various government departments, both in the Algarve and Lisbon, to try and ensure greater awareness of these issues among the foreign community.

During the major fires last year, SCP met with the ANPC in Lisbon and made recommendations concerning improvements in communication and some of these are now being put in place. They also met with senior officials in Lisbon concerning making available nationally, key information on property protection in English and other languages - these are now being put in place.

There are also measures to keep people up to date about fire risks in English and SCP is currently working with the Government to put this in place soon.

With their established national protocols with the ANPC and GNR, SCP are able to reflect the views of the community directly to senior government officials based on the feedback they have received over several years and we will continue to do so. This has included views expressed in letters to the Portugal News and others.

Given the fires last year and the various changes that have been put in place by Government, SCP have held a series of high level meetings with the Nature Conservation Institute and Forestry department (ICNF), ANPC and GNR, to help create greater awareness of the need for people to protect their properties against fires in rural areas.

As a result of this, the ICNF, have agreed that the main leaflets produced by them concerning protecting your property and burning debris will also be produced in English, (and other languages) to help non-Portuguese speaking homeowners and tenants. Safe Communities, working with embassies, is providing the translations.

This is an important step as the leaflets are applicable anywhere in the country and the information provided by the ICNF is the basis of that used by municipalities in providing their own individual leaflets. They are available online, and leaflets and posters in hard copy will be available in due course.

Throughout the year, SCP will be providing updates and information as usual through our website www.safecommunitiesportugal.com and our Facebook page as well as through newsletters and KissFm.

Prime Minister - Cleaning up land is "an effort that involves the whole of society"

"It is essential that everyone is aware that it is fundamental work to clean up the bushes and trees around houses and villages, in order to reduce the risk of fire next summer," he said.

Speaking in Tondela recently, the Prime Minister António Costa said, "We have a duty to reduce the risk of fires. The law has imposed for over 10 years, very clear obligations to all: in the 50 metres around each house and in the 100 metres around each settlement, land must be cleaned, as well as on the banks of the roads, underneath the high voltage lines."

This cleaning effort "we have to do now. By 15 March it is the duty of all owners to carry out this cleaning", he added. "As of 15 March, municipalities have all the power to enter private properties and do what the owners have not done. What's more, they have the right to take possession of those lands and to charge, either for the sale of woody material or for the cleaning of the land, the expenses they have incurred because the owners have not done what they have to do," he said.

António Costa emphasised that "this is an effort that involves the whole of society, and cannot be insured only by the presidents of Parish Councils, Municipal Councils, or Government".

"The work we have for the whole country is enormous. And so either we all do this work now or it will be impossible to do it," he said.

He added that "the reality of living today is different to what we have known in the past". The forest is more disordered and we are living through the second consecutive year of drought - "climate change is a reality that changes the conditions in which we live."

The Prime Minister said that "the ICNF has already identified, in the whole of the country, the 19 highest-risk areas of fire next summer, based on the type of forest, climatic conditions, fire history and more in 180 counties, more than a thousand parishes and thousands of villages."

Photo: Lusa / António Cotrim

FIRE

RURAL FIRE AND PROTECTION CAMPAIGN

Introduction by the Head of Forest Fire Defence Divsion ICNF Rui Almeida

Fires which break out in the countryside, throughout mainland Portugal and Madeira, are more frequent and cause more damage during drier periods. In Portugal, drier periods are naturally more common at hotter times of year.

Such fires are mostly caused by people, so if we change our behaviour we can significantly reduce the number of fires.

Fires affect areas of forest and farmland and, in recent years, due to longer periods of lower humidity and less rainfall, considerable damage has been caused to buildings, goods and properties, not to mention the loss of human and animal lives.

The preventative measures that every person and every household can take are extremely important in reducing the risks.

First of all, take a look at the area surrounding your property to see if the minimum safety conditions have been met, in accordance with the information produced by the ICNF shown in this supplement.

Secondly, make sure you always have something to hand - especially water - that you can use to put out any small fires that might break out. When there is a fire, the first signs that it is

approaching are the smell of burning and the smoke. As soon as you notice these, be alert and check on the ANPC website to see if there are any fires near you. Work out a plan in advance for the evacuation of your family members and animals to safe meeting points. If you are unsure about anything, ask for help and advice from your municipal council's Forestry Office (Gabinete Técnico Florestal).

What the law says - cleaning of land (fuel management)

Article 153. of the Annual Budget of 2018

During the year 2018, the work defined in number 2 of article 15 of Decree-Law no. 124/2006, of 28 June, must occur up to 15 March, in its current version, regardless of the existence or approval of a Municipal Plan for Forest Protection against Fire (PMDFCI).

During the year 2018, the fines referred to in Article 38 of Decree-Law No. 124/2006, of June 28, in its current version, **are doubled.**

Until **31 May** 2018, the Municipalities must ensure the completion of all works and should replace the owners and other non-compliant forest producers, by undertaking fuel management provided by law, by means of a communication and, in the absence of a reply within five days, by posting on workplaces.

In the case of replacement referred to in the previous paragraph, **owners** and other forest producers are obliged to allow access to their land and to reimburse the Municipalities for the expenses incurred with the fuel management.

In order to comply with the provisions of this article, in particular the execution of the work which is necessary for full compliance with the preventive measures referred to in paragraphs 1 and 3, the municipalities rely on the collaboration of the police forces.

Incendios Rurais" (Rural Fires)

One new major change is in terminology, from "Forest" fires to "Rural fires", which is now used by the ICNF in their latest publications regarding land management. Likewise, the ANPC itself in its operational situation page, includes under the heading "Incendios Rurais", bush, agricultural and "forest" fires. The reason for this change is that in recent years fires have extended more into rural areas and have even affected villages themselves. New posters in English and Portuguese, but in other languages as well in due course, can be downloaded from the ICNF website - http://www2.icnf.pt/portal/agir/boapratic/dfci

Good reasons to protect our properties against forest fires

2017 was perhaps one of the most destructive years for forest fires with a total of over 100 lives lost a countless number of properties destroyed and damaged, people made homeless and out of work, and over 520,000 hectares of land burned.

An analysis of the causes of fires undertaken by the GNR shows the following out of 17,090 investigations undertaken.

CAUSE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Negligence	5808	33.9%
Intentional	3405	19.9%
Re-ignitions	1749	10.2%
Natural	135	0.7%
Unknown	6493	37.9%
Total	17,090	

As can be seen fires caused by negligence amount to around one third of all fires. A large component of these is through the burning of debrisresulting from cleaning, when the fire has become out of control. It is important therefore to undertake cleaning in a responsible way, hence its inclusion in this guide.

Latest law update: law n.º10/2018, 14th Feb.

This new law has caused some confusion as there is a lack of clarity as to what types of land are affected by the new provisions. The following has been clarified by the ICNF:

For forests only (does NOT apply to gardens):

- In the area containing trees, the distance between the treetops must be at least 10 metres where the trees in question are maritime pine and eucalyptus; the trees must be pruned to 50% of their height if they are 8 metres tall or more; trees taller than 8 metres must be pruned to a height of 4 metres or less above the ground.
- In the area containing bushes, the maximum height of the vegetation may not exceed 50 centimetres.
- In the area containing smaller shrubs and scrub, the maximum height of the vegetation may not exceed 20 centimetres.

For gardens

Under exceptional circumstances, where the tree cover has a high property or scenic value, a distance of less than 5 metres is admissible, as long as enhanced provisions are made to keep the area clear of combustible materials both horizontally and vertically, and steps are taken to ensure that no combustible materials will accumulate on the roof of the building.

For gardens and agricultural land

There is no need to prune fruit tress (in other words the 4 metre distance rule does not apply) but they cannot be less than 5 metres from the house or cover over a roof top.

There are many provisions in the new law, but the priority is to do the basics, i.e. clean your land using the mandatory provisions outlined in this supplement. Enquiriesabout the new law should be directed to ICNF or Civil Protection or David Thomas.

How Forests are defined

Municipal "Forest" Fire Protection Plans that are in force, do not cover just forests but all rural areas. Likewise the ANPC itself under the heading "Incendios Rurais" (Rural Fires), includes bush, agricultural and "forest" fires. To avoid any misunderstanding that the cleaning of land is limited to only forest areas (where there are few houses anyway), the ICNF have agreed the term "Rural" Fire Protection for the English speaking community.

SOMETHING TO SHOUT ABOUT!

find out MORE about the Rural Fire Prevention and Protection Campaign on the SAFE COMMUNITIES PORTUGAL stand at this year's Fair

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Here are just some of the headlines singing Portugal's praises over the last year:

- Currently Portugal is at the top of the destination list to be considered, either to visit or live
- Crowned Best European Destination 2017
- Algarve Third Cheapest Destination for UK Travellers
- Portugal named World's Best Golf Desination
- UN Tourism Boss chooses Portugal for First Official Trip
- Portugal in Top Ten of Retirement Destinations

The theme of The 2018 International Algarve Fair is 'Something to shout about'.

If your company has something to shout about, you need to be there. Book your stand today.

13th successful YEAR

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Protecting your house against Rural Fires – WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

The National Forest Authority (ICNF) gives the basic steps to protect your house against the spread of forest fires. Remember these will not prevent a fire starting, but will help in preventing it reaching your property. These are divided into two groups: "mandatory" and "advisable". Remember it is mandatory to manage the vegetation measured 50 metres from the exterior of your house. This must be completed by 15 March or risk a hefty fine. Please refer to the poster (Opposite) published by the ICNF in February 2018

Cleaning of land next to public roads

Land should be cleaned 10 m either side. If a public road this is the responsibility of municipality. However, if land within the 10 m strip is privately owned, the owner or tenant will be asked to clean, failing which council can enter and do so. In such cases wood cut will be can be sold by the contractor not owner.

Government Hotline for more information has been established 808 200 520

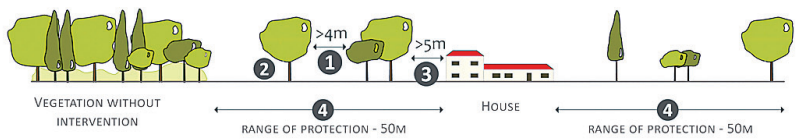
PROTECT YOUR HOUSE AGAINST RURAL FIRES

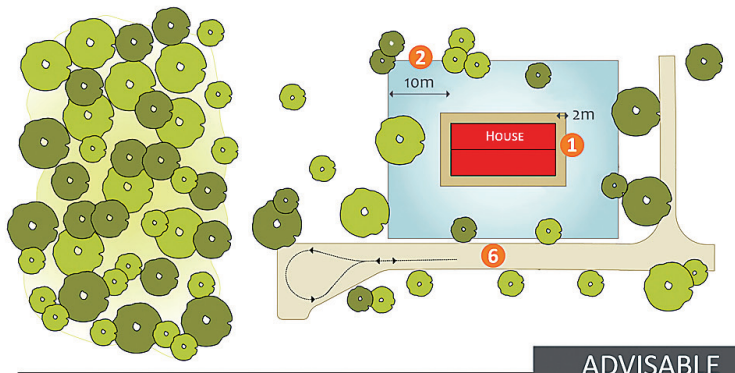
MANDATORY

By 15th March it is mandatory to manage the vegetation measured from the exterior wall of the house:

- within a minimum range of 50m around the buildings, whenever these lands are occupied by forest, shrubs or natural pastures;
- With a minimum range of no less than 10m on land in rural areas with other types of use.

1. The space between treetops should be, at least, 4m.
2. Prune trees 4m above the ground. For trees with a height of less than 8m, prune the lower half (50%) of the tree.
3. Trees and bushes must be 5m away from the buildings and treetops must not extend over the roof.
4. Do not keep firewood, debris or any type of inflammable material within this area.





ADVISABLE

1. Have a strip of non-inflammable paving, between one and two metres in width, around the building.
2. Avoid having very inflammable vegetation or plants that dry easily within 10 metres of your house. Avoid having hedges made of species that accumulate lots of dry woody material inside, or which contain oils or resins, and avoid enclosures made of cane or dry heather.
3. Check that the watering system and hoses are in working order.
4. The roof is one of the most vulnerable parts of the house. Remove grass, leaves, branches and moss from rooftops, gutters and drain pipes. Fit a spark screen in the chimneys.
5. Protect doors and windows with blinds or shutters. Use double-glazing and tempered glass and choose sliding windows.
6. Keep the access to your house unobstructed and create a space that will permit U-turns.
7. Keep an up-to-date list of emergency contacts to hand.

Stay informed!

Check daily Fire Risk for your region and contac the IPMA and the ICNF Know the constraints associated with the 5 levels.

In case of fire
DIAL 112
(Free call)

IN CASE OF A FIRE NEAR YOUR HOUSE

1. **Wear loose cotton clothing** (avoid synthetic fabrics) in order to cover your arms and legs, and wear closed footwear. Avoid **exposure to smoke** and fumes and cover your mouth and nose with a damp cloth.
2. Close all doors leading to the exterior and all interior doors too, as well as all windows and any other openings (ventilation grids, for example). Switch off automatic door- and gate-opening mechanisms. Put wet, rolled-up towels along the bottom of doors and windows. **Any open crack could prove fatal** by allowing the fire into your home.
3. Close gas valves. **Move combustible materials away** from windows (e.g. curtains, sofas, etc.) and remove garden furniture and any wood that may be on the porches or next to the house.
4. **Water the area around the house**. If you have a watering system, turn it on. Gather **buckets of water** indoors and outdoors. If a fire breaks out, put it out immediately with water, earth or branches.
5. Keep a vehicle in a state of constant readiness for emergency evacuation. Stay indoors and **follow the instructions given to you by the authorities**.
6. After the fire has passed, check to see if there are any small areas still alight; look for smoke and/or flames next to doors, windows, roofs, chimneys and gutters. **Remain alert over the followings days**.

www.icnf.pt | www.safecommunitiesportugal.com

ICNF Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas

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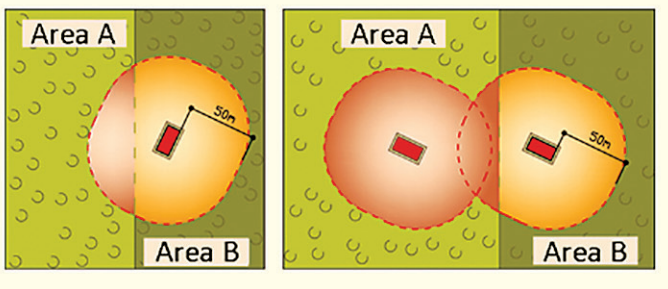
Neighbours

Where a neighbour's land border is within 50 metres of your house, management of the 50 metre protection range becomes a joint responsibility between you and your neighbour. It is important therefore to discuss this with them and work out a division of responsibility.



FIRE

RURAL FIRE AND PROTECTION CAMPAIGN

What to do if the neighbouring landowner does not comply

This is one of the biggest problems facing landowners. If part of the neighbouring land is within 50 metres of your house then they need to comply. Sometimes such land has been abandoned and has therefore become overgrown. In other instances the people may have little money to clean their land and risk a fine. And unfortunately there are some who refuse to clean.

In tackling this, it is best to try and speak to the neighbour first if possible. However if this is not possible or you have spoken and the owner refuses, then it should be reported to either the local Civil Protection unit in your municipality or the GNR. This will then be checked, and enforcement action taken against the owner and the land cleaned by the municipality (on a risk priority basis).

How these measure will be enforced

In 2017, some 1,686 people were fined for not managing their land. This year with far greater priority being given to this, there is the potential for these figures to rise should people not comply.

Prevention also comes before enforcement however, so campaigns are being undertaken throughout the country to create awareness among the community so that as much land is cleared as possible by the 15 March. These awareness campaigns are being undertaken by the GNR, civil protection, Bombeiros and others, including volunteer organisations, through the media and visits to those in isolated areas.

It is important to note that the whole object of the campaign is to ensure that the areas where the risks are high are cleaned to help protect life and property in the event of a fire. Where reports have been made to the council and or GNR, or they themselves have noted areas that are required to be cleaned, the owner or tenant will be warned, with advice given on what needs to be done, before enforcement action is taken.

If, however, by 15 March land has not been **cleaned** then a contravention order may be issued.

As far as we are aware the landowners/tenants, **who do not comply after such warnings by the GNR or Civil Protection,** will receive in due course a notification by post of the fine, giving the amount, how it needs to be paid and the payment deadline. Failure to do so will result in further action and the likelihood of higher penalties.

Fines: The fines for failing to clean land for 2018 have been doubled and are currently **€280 - €10, 000 for individuals and €1,600 - €120,000 for corporations**

In practice, if it is obvious that you are clearing your land, but not finished by 15 March, you will likely be issued with a notice and a timeline to clear it by.

Other matters to be aware of

If there are electric or telephone wires across your property that are preventing the safe pruning of trees, contact the civil protection office, EDP/MEO or the câmara.

Vegetation next to a road, should be cut back 10 metres away. If the road is public, contact the local civil protection office.

It is clear that there will be many questions arising from the various laws and it is not possible to cover everything in this article. Much of this is common sense. In case of doubt the best action is to contact the local civil protection office (email address/and contact numbers provided, or the ICNF office

Difference between burning debris and pasture renewal burning

For many people living in rural areas, the disposal of debris from tree cuttings and bushes is a constant challenge.

The normal process is to burn these, but in doing so there are a number of laws that dictate when and under what conditions this is possible. Cleaning your land is essential to prevent the spread of fire so understanding the law is essential.

However, sometimes there is confusion between burning debris and pasture renewal burning. It is important to understand the differences because the approval conditions are very different.

Debris burning (Queima), is used mainly in the cleaning of land before the critical fire period (normally starting 1 July) and takes places after bushes, shrubs, tree branches have been cut, gathered together in small piles and then burned. Do not place these piles, however under trees.

Pasture renewal burning (Queimada) is generally for grassland renewal, the burning of stubble and forest debris that are uncut or cut on the ground, but NOT gathered into piles.

Neither type of burning is permitted during the Critical Fire period, and when the Fire Risk is "Very High" or "Extreme". It is important to note that, in addition, pasture renewal burning is also NOT permitted when the fire risk is "HIGH". In other words it is only permitted in Moderate or Low conditions.

Civil Protection Contacts

Albufeira	protecao.civil@cm-albufeira.pt	289 599 503
Aljezur	pcivil@cm-aljezur.pt	289 900 014
Alcoutim	protecao.civil@cm-alcoutim.pt	281 540 500
Castro Marim	expediente@cm-castromarim.pt	281 510 740
Faro	cbsfaro@cm-faro.pt	289 888 000
Lagoa	protecaocivil@cm-lagoa.pt	282 380 400
Lagos	proteccao.civil@cm-lagos.pt	282 768 008
Loulé	dpcv@cm-loule.pt	289 400 827
Monchique	smpc.monchique@cm-monchique.pt	282 910 210
Olhão	protecaocivil@cm-olhao.pt	289 710 000
Portimão	proteccao.civil@cm-portimao.pt	800 282 112
S.Brás de Alportel	proteccao.civil@cm-sbras.pt	289 840 000
Silves	protecao.civil@cm-silves.pt	289 840 000
Tavira	bombeiros@cm-tavira.pt	281 322 122
Vila do Bispo	pcivil@cm-viladobispo.pt	282 630 600
Vila Real St. António	smpc@cm-vrsa.pt	281 530 190

Contact details for the ICNF Algarve:

Tel: 289 700 210 Fax: (+351) 289 700 219, E-mail: dcnfalg@icnf.pt

Obtaining permission/permit before lighting fires

Debris burning

If you wish to burn debris in piles outside the critical period or when the wildfire hazard is not Very High or Maximum, you should telephone your local Bombeiros and obtain permission.

In these cases, you need to call them and check whether it is permissible given the weather conditions in your area. They will ask you a number of questions such as the date and the time of the burning and what you are intending to burn (items for instance such as tyres and plastics are prohibited).

Burning of large areas - pasture renewal burning

The burning of large areas such as in pasture renewal burning is only permitted after obtaining a permit/permission from the city council or parish in your area. If it is granted it may need to be conducted in the presence of a certified firefighter or, a team of firefighters. Anyone contravening this is liable for a fine of up to € 60,000. You cannot burn when the fire risk is "High", "Very High" or "Extreme" or during the Critical Fire period.

What the councils will do

Councils are required to undertake work to clean land if owners refuse to do so. In addition to any fines, the owners will be charged for this work. Clearly after many years of inaction, this is a considerable task to achieve so it is likely that it will be prioritised , depending on the level of risk to the property concerned.

The Government has identified 189 municipalities and 1049 parishes on the mainland that are at maximum risk and 9800 clusters of properties that are an effective priority.

RURAL FIRE AND PROTECTION CAMPAIGN

Precautions to be taken when burning fires

Burning debris is one of the most common ways of disposing of cut waste from your land but when uncontrolled it is one of the biggest causes of rural fires.

The ICNF has provided a comprehensive list of precautions to be taken when burning debris at times when it is permissible to do so - this is known as a controlled burn. This is used to eliminate left-over materials from forestry operations or farming, such as pruned leaves and branches from vines and olive trees, among others, cut up and piled into a heap.

The precautions to be taken include when and under what conditions fires can be lit and how they should be managed. Specifically it covers issues such as: humidity, air temperature, wind, fuels, avoiding slopes; the gradual feeding of fires; monitoring fires; water supply; utensils to be available and the proper management of the aftermath during the period of extinguishing and beyond. Many fires are caused by people burning debris or land without taking the proper precautions.

These very helpful tips will allow fires to be lit and controlled, during periods where it is permitted to do so, without the risk of the fire becoming uncontrolled and threatening your life and property and that of others.

The basics

The most basic advice is to choose cloudy days; take your mobile phone with you so you can raise the alarm in the case of fire and have someone else with you when you undertake the burn. Do not undertake controlled burns when the weather is hot and dry or when it is windy.

How to undertake a controlled burn safely

One good piece of advice is to start the fire early in the morning when it is cooler and damper and allows you more time to monitor the fire and prevent any re-ignition late at night.

- **Move the pile of left-over materials that you are going to burn away from grazing land, woods, scrubland and trees.**
- **Make a vegetation-free firebreak around the things that you are going to burn.**
- **Wet the firebreak before you start the burn.**
- **Have a water supply or a hose alongside the site of the burn.**
- **Make several small piles instead of big ones.**
- **Burn the left-over waste in batches.**
- **Stay vigilant. If any sparks fly, put them out immediately.**
- **Leaving a burn unattended is prohibited.**
- **Pay attention to changes in the wind. Protect yourself from the smoke by covering your mouth and nose with damp cloths or a smoke mask. Inhaling smoke can be fatal.**
- **If the burn gets out of control keep a safe distance and dial 112.**

How to put out a controlled burn.

It is important that these tips are followed as many fires are caused by fires that have been left to burn without being properly extinguished.

- **Keep burning until only ashes are left.**
- **Turn over the burnt remains to see if any small flames still persist.**
- **Put the burn site out with water or by throwing earth on top of it.**
- **Do not leave the site until you have checked that there is no smoke coming from the ashes.**

If you are using local farmers and/or contractors to burn debris on your land, ensure that they follow this advice. Do not allow them to set fire to a large area of uncut vegetation, as this requires a licence. If rules are not folleowed and a fire develops causing damage to others, as the landowner you may still have some liability.

What to do in the approach of or during a fire

The actions that you can take will depend how close the fire is to your home. Remember fires can move quickly, especially in windy conditions. The poster shows the basic measures that should be taken if a fire is close to your home. Of course, in particularly high risk areas, it is best to prepare well ahead for fires, with emergency kits at hand should evacuation become necessary.

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FIRE

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SCA News

In recent decades, forest fires have become an increasing concern for mainland Portugal, and in recent years have reached enormous dimensions, both in terms of size and intensity, drastically affecting not only ecosystems, but also, sadly, the population and their belongings.

2017 was catastrophic. A lack of forest management coupled with lack of intervention/maintenance of forest fire protection networks, harsh weather and an unprepared population, in terms of self-protection measures to be adopted, fuelled the tragic outcome.

In the Algarve, while the hot weather recorded was the second most severe in the last decade and the number of fires was higher than the decade's average, the results obtained in 2017 were rather favourable.

However, in spite of the work carried out in terms of structural prevention, awareness-raising, surveillance and the enormous effort made to set up special firefighting resources to meet the operational needs of the Region, we know that the Algarve is vulnerable to large fires.

However, we also know that the response mechanism in place in the Region has proved highly efficient year-after-year, even though the land use planning of the Algarve's rural and forested areas does not yet guarantee sustainability of the results achieved.

In recent years, we have been working towards improving the practices, methodologies and procedures in operations, through the implementation of operational training for all civil protection officers and entities that cooperate in the field of fire prevention.

Specific focus has been placed on the security and safety of populations and their assets.

In this context, the citizen plays a fundamental role in front-line civil protection, and must be prepared for and aware of the risks to which they are exposed, as well as understanding self-protection measures needed to protect themselves and fellow citizens.

After the fires of 2017, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 157-A/2017, of 27 October, was published, which advocates, in the context of strengthening population security, a set of measures aimed at creating programmes such as the 'Safe People' and 'Safe Village' programmes, whose purpose is to raise awareness and establish structural measures for the protection of people and goods, as well as buildings within the urban-forest interface, through the involvement of citizens and various entities, including local authorities.

The involvement of society as a whole is therefore of paramount importance in keeping citizens and communities informed about the measures to be taken in the event of a fire. Clearing land around properties must be a priority, in accordance with the laws in force, to create a barrier so that in the event of a fire, material and, fundamentally, human damages are as minimal as possible, given that the means of combating fires are limited.

We have every confidence in these strategies and procedures, which have shown improvements, as well as being sure that efforts to optimise resources and competencies will be pursued with the same ongoing commitment by all and as always, to make the Algarve increasingly safer and resilient.

Concluding, and citing Alexandre Herculano: "It is the progress of ideas that brings change, not the progress of errors that makes them inevitable."

Faro, 20 February, 2018

Vítor Vaz Pinto

Operational Commander of the Algarve

National Civil Protection Authority

Fire Prevention and Protection Campaign

Why such a campaign is important

Providing a safe environment is important to our quality of life here in Portugal. Fires in rural areas pose a risk to communities including: ourselves, our families, neighbours, friends, animals and properties. We must therefore do what we can to help reduce the fire risk through cleaning our land by 15 March. An important step is creating awareness, and this is the aim of this campaign and supplement - getting key information across so we can take the necessary protection steps. This supplement cannot provide all the answers, as the laws can be quite complicated and are frequently changing, but I hope it will help address the most important issues and where clarification is required, provide the necessary contact points where further information can be found.

David Thomas

David Thomas, Safe Communities

Equipment to have handy in case of a fire

For those living in rural areas where the risk of fires is high, it is worth considering having an emergency pack available should a fire break out.

The ANPC have produced comprehensive guidelines covering this subject which can be downloaded from their website in Portuguese. An English version is as follows:

Have the following spare equipment: Battery operated radio and flashlight with backup batteries; a first aid kit; food and beverage in preserved packaging; strong and heat insulated shoes (leather for example).

In the event that your family may be separated during a fire (when the adults are working and the children in school) develop a plan to bring them together. Use a point of contact between your family and friends. Make sure everyone knows your name, address and phone number;

The above are basic steps and you may wish to supplement these items if you are living in a high risk area, particularly during the summer.

Keep the items, together with a rucksack, available if you have to leave the property quickly.

safe communities portugal

Property Insurance - Fires

It goes without saying that if you live in a rural area property insurance including the risk of fires is very important. It is also important that you check your clauses carefully as some elements of protection of property are mandatory.

Further information can be found on www.safecommunitiesporugal.com