



**West Sussex
Fire & Rescue
Service**

Farmland safety and fire prevention

Information on preventing fire and incidents on your farm and steps you can take to protect you and your business, workforce, and assets.

westsussex.gov.uk/RuralFireSafety

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Farmland risks and incidents

Agriculture has the highest rate of injuries and fatalities at work out of all industry sectors.

The annual average injury rate over the last five years is around 21 times higher than all industry rates combined.

Last year in the UK 27 people were killed as a result of farming and other agriculture-related activities.

Older workers (aged 45+) account for 80% of all work-related fatalities in agriculture over the last five years. The youngest fatality was a farmer's three-year-old child.

All farms are at risk of fire. Every year in the UK around 1,700 farm buildings and 66,000 areas of grassland are destroyed by fire.

Preventing fires on your farm

Common causes of fire on farms include:

- spontaneous combustion of stored hay or straw;
- machinery fires;
- arson; and
- electrical failures and power lines.

Did you know?

You can get in touch with your local fire station and request a visit to your farm. This will enable our crew to help you identify fire risks and provide them with prior knowledge of your land which will assist them in the event of an incident on your farm. Email our Rural Engagement Officer to arrange a visit to your farm, frs.cptt@westsussex.gov.uk





Fire breaks and water supplies

Fire breaks

- Fire breaks between crops can be used to stop or slow the progress of a fire.
- Ideally, a fire break should be three times the width of the highest crop or vegetation nearby. For example, the recommended fire break for a four-foot wheat crop would be a minimum of 12 feet wide.
- Revisit your site fire plan before each seasonal crop rotation and maintain the fire breaks regularly.
- Fire breaks can assist with the salvage operation to recover valuable assets, buildings, and environment.

Are you planning a controlled burn on your land? Call Joint Fire Control on **01737 499050** to let them know.

Water sources

- Make sure your water sources are regularly maintained and added to your fire risk assessment and plan, including the locations of your nearest hydrants.
- To check when your hydrant was last serviced, email **frswaterandaccess@westsussex.gov.uk**
- If water access is limited on your farmland, keep a vacuum tanker of water or similar nearby for easy access.

Remember in the event of a fire on your farm, our crews will prioritise protecting people, livestock, buildings and structures, over crops.

Haystack fires

Safe harvesting, storage, and monitoring of hay and straw is critical in preventing fires on your farm. Here are our top tips.

- Remove hay and straw from fields as soon as possible after harvesting.
- Hay should be dry before storing to prevent spontaneous combustion. Many fires are caused by storing damp or wet hay.
- Store hay and straw away from other buildings – especially those containing fuels, chemicals, or livestock – to prevent fire spreading.
- Keep stacks of hay and straw at least 10 metres apart and ensure there is sufficient space between the top of the stack and electrical roof lighting.

Monitor the temperature of your haystacks regularly. Insert a pipe into the centre of the middle or lower stacks and pass a thermometer through the pipe on a piece of string for 15 minutes to check the temperature and refer to the guide opposite.

Haystack temperature guide

- 160° to 180° Fahrenheit – consider moving hay out of storage so it can dry and cool.
- 180° to 190° Fahrenheit – alert the fire and rescue service. Close off ventilation to stacks to reduce air supply.
- 210° Fahrenheit – call the fire and rescue service and bring water sources close by. Do not move the stacks as it may ignite when exposed to greater air supply.

You can find links to further information from the NFU on farm risk management on our website westsussex.gov.uk/RuralFireSafety

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Machinery fires

Wear and tear on farm machinery is a common cause of fire. In 2022 UK fire and rescue services attended over 800 agricultural machinery fires across the country – the equivalent of nine machines per day during the harvest season! Here are our top tips to prevent farm machinery fires.

- Carry out daily checks on your machinery and before each use.
- Log and report defects according to farmland policies.
- Carry out a safety check on all loads before departure to prevent loss.
- Make sure you and those who work with machinery are compliant to operate them to prevent incidents and fines.

You can find links to further information from the NFU on farm transport and machinery maintenance on our website
westsussex.gov.uk/RuralFireSafety

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Farm plan template

You can use this space to draw a map of your farmland which can be used to assist our crews in an emergency.

Name:

Please mark the following on your plan:

- entrance(s) to farm;
- nearest road;
- hydrant locations;
- water sources;
- fire safety box;
- sleeping areas;
- livestock housing;
- door locations to buildings;
- hazardous materials;
- power lines;
- chemical stores;
- gas shut off;
- electricity shut off; and
- water shut off.

| | | | |
|--|--------|---------|---------------|
| | Phone: | Mobile: | Date created: |
|--|--------|---------|---------------|

Arson

Most farmers have unfortunately experienced arson, trespassing, or theft on their land. A serious fire or theft can affect the financial stability of even the most successful business.

Sussex Police Rural Crime

If you own or manage a farm, we advise you to contact Sussex Police to ensure you have a point of contact to report incidents on your land. Further information and contact details can be found at the end of this booklet.

40% 

of farmland fires are started deliberately, costing farmers over £9 million per year.





Electrical incidents and overhead power lines

In the UK two agricultural workers die every year from contact with power lines. In 2023 tragically we had a fatality in West Sussex.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SEN) is the major power network provider for the west of the county. They can offer a range of free services to allow you to work safely near power lines.

Find out more on our website westsussex.gov.uk/RuralFireSafety

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Our top tips for working safely near power lines

- Make sure all workers know the maximum reach and height of the vehicle they are operating and where the power lines are.
- If contact is made with a power line, stay in the cab, and try to drive clear.
- If you cut through a power line during excavation works on your land, do not enter the excavation to examine.
- Consider hills and undulations in the ground which may affect the height of the vehicle you are operating around power lines.

In an emergency, call **105**. If in doubt, or if there's a fire, call **999**.

Preparing for emergencies

Having an emergency plan in place will aid our crews in the event of a fire or incident on your farm. Here are some actions you can take.

- Make sure the entrances to your farmland are clear, accessible, and well signposted.
- Keep your fire plan up to date. This should include a map of your land, and the locations of hydrants and water sources, livestock, and hazardous materials. Your plan should be available to hand to the crew on arrival.
- Make a note of anything stored in rented or leased units on your land. In particular: bottled gas, petrol and diesel, slurry and other animal waste, guns and munitions, asbestos, chemicals, pesticides, fertilisers, and any other poisons.

- If any dangerous substances are stored, you must add the relevant hazard warning symbol to your map and have it clearly labelled on the building.
- Have a representative on the road to meet and direct emergency vehicles and crews.

What3Words is an app that maps 3x3 metre grids and assigns three random words to them. This makes it easier for emergency services to find the exact location of an incident.

We also recommend installing a fire safety box on your farm that can be easily identified by our crew on arrival at an incident. This should house your fire plan.



Flood prevention and advice

Flooding on your farm can present a risk to your life, business, livestock, and land. Make sure you have a plan in place for flooding. This is particularly important if your land has a history of being affected by floods.

Our top tips for dealing with a flood

- Identify areas of flood risk on your farm.
- Identify areas such as higher ground where you can move livestock if required.
- Dredge and clear ditches on your land annually and after a flood.
- Maintain water sources, streams and riverbanks on your land and remove debris.
- Remember that the NFU have access to their own spillage team.

Further advice on flooding can be found on our website. Here you can sign up for free flood alerts through the Government website and download a personal flood plan.

westsussex.gov.uk/FloodingAdvice

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Animal rescues

We have specialised teams within our service who are available 24/7 to assist with animal rescues. If you have an animal in distress – call the fire and rescue service. Don't put yourself at risk by attempting to rescue an animal.

Safe and Well Visits

Safe and Well Visits are a free service offered by West Sussex Fire & Rescue to residents within the county. We aim to reach those who are most at risk within our community and who may have a vulnerability.

Over the last 10 years, 80% of people involved in fatal fires had a care or support need and someone caring for them. Only 18% of them were known to the fire and rescue service.

You may be caring for or supporting a loved one in your home or in a property on your land who has one or more of the following.

- A disability or hard of hearing
- Suffering with their mental health
- Poor mobility
- Has or could benefit from a careline alarm
- Over 65 and smokes inside their home
- Could struggle to evacuate in the event of a fire.



As part of the Safe and Well Visit we can also provide smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and other bespoke aids where required.

To request a Safe and Well Visit, call **0345 8729 719** or complete the referral form on our website.

westsussex.gov.uk/SafeAndWellVisit

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Useful contacts

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)

- Small business: **0345 058 0002**
- Domestic customer: **0345 270 0700**
- Emergency: **105**

NFU Mutual

- Head Office: **01789 204 211**

The Farming Community Network (FCN)

The FCN is a voluntary organisation and charity that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people in farming and provide support at times of difficulty and change. You can speak to them in confidence.

- Head Office: **03000 111 999**
- Email: **help@fcn.org.uk**

Sussex Police (Rural Crime)

- Email: **ruralcrime.team@sussex.police.uk**

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

- Prevention team (Safe and Well Visits): **03458 729 719**
- Email: **cptt@westsussex.gov.uk**
- Rural Engagement Officer: **077328 23282**
- Controlled burning (Joint Fire Control): **01737 499050**