



news release

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For Immediate Release

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Severe wildfire warning as temperatures set to soar

Attachments

- The aftermath of the fire in Wareham Forest.jpg [The aftermath of the fire in Wareham Forest.jpg](#)
- The bin fire in Littlehampton.jpg [The bin fire in Littlehampton.jpg](#)
- The burnt-out wheelie bin in Stedham.jpg [The burnt-out wheelie bin in Stedham.jpg](#)
- The damage caused to the bin in Littlehampton.jpg [The damage caused to the bin in Littlehampton.jpg](#)
- The fire in Wareham Forest.JPG [The fire in Wareham Forest.JPG](#)
- The wildfire at Iping Common in 2018.PNG [The wildfire at Iping Common in 2018.PNG](#)
- The wildfire at Iping Common, 2018.PNG [The wildfire at Iping Common, 2018.PNG](#)

“If this is the damage a small disposable BBQ can do to a bin, imagine the devastation it could cause to our countryside.”

That is the warning from a firefighter who has recently returned from tackling the vast wildfire in Dorset after disposable BBQs burnt their way through two separate bins.

In the first incident on Sunday, a BBQ melted its way through a wheelie bin in Stedham, while on Wednesday evening a crew from Littlehampton was called to extinguish a litter bin that had caught fire – again due to a disposed BBQ.

Watch Commander Matt Gamblen is West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service’s Wildfire Tactical Advisor. Earlier this month he was mobilised to help support Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service as they battled to bring a fire the size of 230 football

pitches in Wareham Forest under control. The forest and heathland was alight for more than a week and is thought to be the worst of its kind in living memory.

Matt, who is a Retained Liaison Officer and Retained Watch Commander at Midhurst Fire Station, said: “Over the next few days we are expecting some very warm weather, and having already had a very dry spell for a number of days now, this increases the risk of wildfires significantly. The Met Office is forecasting the risk of wildfires in our county to be severe over the next few days and into the early part of next week.

“But there are some very easy steps that we can all take to mitigate this risk, and ensure that we are not faced with an incident on the scale of the fire in Wareham Forest. While investigations continue into that fire, it is believed the fire was started accidentally through social activity in the forest.

“Even something seemingly insignificant as a discarded cigarette or a small disposable BBQ can lead to absolutely devastating consequences, especially in these extremely dry conditions. Please be sensible when lighting BBQs. Accelerants such as firelighters or fluids have the potential for a fire to get out of control very quickly, while nearby sheds, fences and dry grass can easily catch light from just a spark.

“I wasn’t surprised to see the damage caused to these bins by the disposable BBQs – they are designed to get extremely hot, and if not left to cool properly they can very easily start a significant fire. In the first instance the homeowner was lucky as one of their neighbours spotted the smoke coming from the bin and was able to extinguish it quickly. On Wednesday evening our crews were able to bring the fire under control quickly, but not before the bin was completely destroyed by fire.

“Next time, we may not be so lucky.”

Residents are urged to take extra care when out and about over the coming days and ensure they don’t put themselves or others at risk of fire: To avoid injuries or damage to property, residents should follow these simple precautions:

- Don’t burn household or garden waste
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Ensure a BBQ is on a flat site, well away from a shed, trees or shrubs
- Keep children, garden games and pets well away from the cooking area
- Keep a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergencies
- Ensure the BBQ is cool before attempting to move it
- If you're using a disposable BBQ ensure it has cooled before putting it in the bin. To avoid starting a fire you should allow it to cool for several hours and then pour copious amounts of water over it to make sure it is out before putting it in the bin.

Matt added: “We are all feeling the strain at the moment. In tackling the fire in Wareham Forest, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service had to draw on firefighters from each of their 50 fire stations and neighbouring services to bring the fire under control. By working together we can ensure that we are not faced with such a fire in West Sussex and that no further pressure is put on the emergency

services, or our NHS colleagues having to treat people for burns and respiratory issues.”