RUCKINGE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH MONTHY NEWS AUGUST 2026

Dear All

I hope everyone is enjoying the lovely weather and sunshine and although very hot with challenging conditions we all need to remember the dark dingy pouring rain filled days of the winter.
It's about changing habits, staying as cool as possible but keeping well hydrated.

My work has continued all the routine matters which you would expect, and I ask you especially to be alert to Bogus callers, Rogue Traders and SCAMS.
Alongside those are the need to stay vigilant on vehicles, sheds, garages, barns, stables and any outbuildings.

WATER SHORTAGES/MAINS FAILURE

It is well document that areas have lost water supplies and the need to have bottled water stations set up

IMPORTANT. PLEASE REGISTER

If you are elderly, disabled, or vulnerable please register to ensure bottled water is delivered to you , if supplies fail.
To ensure you receive help in these situations contact your water company (All details on your bill) and ensure you register to be supported by delivery of bottles water.

I attended at Water Station when Kingsnorth supplies failed to ensure I understood the procedures.
In Ruckinge a Water Station would be set up (maybe two) I imagine at the village hall car parks where people can pick up litres of bottled water.

FIRE STATION CLOSURES
Fire Service management put forward to its fire committee (that's the committee that oversees the fire service made up of KCC Councillors and Medway Councillors) a proposal to close a number of fire stations and remove appliances from other stations.

As an ex Senior Assistant Chief Officer of the Kent Brigade, I was truly appalled at the paper which was completely out of touch with the communities of Kent.
Rarely do you see politicians of all parties and councillors of all parties and councils like parishes and community council all totally on the same page against the cuts.

Put to one side the challenging conditions we are facing the paper was totally thrown out by the fire committee as residents in Kent lobbied hard to save the stations.

That battle I am sure will come again in the future but for now we can turn to focus on the fact we need every single fire appliance and their stations

I served in the front-line stations in 1976. Yes, it was difficult, but I rate this summer as worse.
At the same time water supplies are poor from fire hydrants both flow and pressure.
I will leave that issue for now and return to it in the future.

Now I focus on fire prevention in these hot conditions

PLEASE TAKE GREAT CARE.
Is there really a need for bonfires? Care with discarded cigarettes, care with barbeques

Wildfires destroy all In its path crops, fields, property and as you have seen on national news spreads to homes too. It kills wildlife and animals and very sadly I must remind you all the last operational firefighter killed in Kent in the mid 90s was in a cornfield fire in High Halden.

I am posting helpful guidance from colleagues in both Kent and London Fire Brigade.

IF YOU SEE A FIRE DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUSTANCES HESITATE TOI CALL THE FIRE SERVICE ON 999

Do not worry if you get it wrong, do not try to find out what, get that call away and make follow up calls if circumstances change. The fire control may order on additional appliances on that vital second call you make!

General wildfire safety tips

Regardless of the risk level, follow these essential wildfire safety guidelines:

- If you see a fire, call 999 immediately. Provide as much detail as possible including the terrain, size, and location. What3Words is a useful app that can pinpoint your exact location, making it easier for firefighters to find.
- Report any suspicious fire activity immediately to authorities or call Crimestoppers anonymously at 0800 555 111.
- If caught in a wildfire, move downhill – fires spread faster uphill – keep upwind as the wind speed and direction will influence fire spread, potentially driving the fire towards you - and seek a clear, open area.
- Always check for fire bans and weather conditions before planning outdoor activities.
- If advised to evacuate, do so quickly and follow emergency services' instructions.
- Stay clear of smoke where possible, as smoke contains harmful products and may obscure your vision.





How you can prevent wildfires

Preventing wildfires is everyone’s responsibility. Follow these simple steps to reduce the risk:

- Dispose of cigarettes properly—never throw them out of car windows, as they can ignite dry grass.
- Avoid barbecues in parks, public spaces, and other open areas.
- Take your litter home, especially glass bottles, which can magnify sunlight and start fires.

What to do if you discover a wildfire

- Make sure you're in a safe place (away from vegetation and smoke). Stay calm and call 999 immediately.
- If you're in your car, close all windows and vents.
- When you call 999 be as precise as you can about the location, the size and any other information. The free what3words app can help you pinpoint your location, so download it now.
- Don't try to tackle the fire yourself.
- Stay well away from wildfires as fire can smoulder or spread underground.

How to prevent grass fires

- Don't have barbecues (including disposable ones) in parks, public spaces or on balconies. Take a picnic instead.
- Never leave barbecues unattended and put them out properly after you've finished using them.
- Take extra care to ensure cigarettes are put right out and disposed of safely.
- Glass bottles and other clear materials can start fires if left in direct sunlight. Make sure you don't leave any glass bottles lying around in parks and open spaces. Take your litter home with you if nearby bins are full.



Grass and Wildfires Long periods of hot, dry weather cause dry grass and foliage - so it only takes a spark to cause a wildfire.

Wildfires are uncontrolled and unpredictable. They can spread very quickly.

What to do if you discover a wildfire

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- If you're in your car, close all windows and vents.
- When you call 999 be as precise as you can about the location, the size and any other information. The free what3words app can help you pinpoint your location, so download it now.
- Don't try to tackle the fire yourself.
- Stay well away from wildfires as fire can smoulder or spread underground.

How to prevent grass fires

Anything burning can start a grass fire. Cigarettes and barbecues are commonly to blame.

Barbecues

Barbecues can cause fires when smouldering ash and embers are carried by the wind onto areas of dry grass.

- Don't have barbecues (including disposable ones) in parks and public spaces. Take a picnic instead.
- Be aware that children, animals, balls or anything else may knock over barbecues, increasing the risk of grass fires. Keep children, pets and garden games a safe distance from the barbecue.
- Never leave barbecues unattended and put them out properly after you've finished using them.
- Put your barbecue on level ground (not decking) and keep it well away from anything that may catch fire (for example sheds, fences, trees, tents).
- Have a bucket of water or sand nearby for emergency use.
- Don't barbecue on balconies. Flames, sparks and hot embers can cause a fire and spread quickly to other parts of the building or nearby grassland.
- If you decide to use a disposable barbecue – put it right out and make sure it's cooled before you throw it away. Long after they have been discarded they can still cause fires and give off dangerous carbon monoxide fumes.

Cigarettes

It's safest not to smoke but, if you choose to smoke outdoors, please be a considerate smoker.

- Take extra care to ensure cigarettes are put right out and disposed of safely.
- Never throw cigarette butts from a balcony, they could start a fire elsewhere.
- Don't drop cigarettes onto dry ground or throw them from car windows.
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.

Glass bottles

Glass bottles and other clear materials can start fires if left in direct sunlight. Make sure you don't leave any glass bottles lying around in parks and open spaces. Take your litter home with you if nearby bins are full.

Arson

Arson (deliberate firesetting) is a criminal offence that can lead to loss of life and injury. It can damage property and have a negative effect on the environment.

Setting a fire in parks and open spaces such as grasslands, wooded areas, sports grounds and allotments not only kills wildlife, it can cause widespread damage especially during extreme hot and dry weather.

If you see any suspicious activity report it by calling either: Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or the police on 101.

London Fire Brigade offers free one-to-one fire safety education to children and young people who have demonstrated any type of firesetting or fire play and provide advice to parents and carers. Visit our Firesetting Intervention Scheme page to find out more.

Wildfires - protecting your home and garden

Wildfires can destroy homes and gardens, but there are steps you can take to reduce the risk.

The danger of embers

Hot embers, carried by the wind, can travel very far and start new fires a long way from the original wildfire. The video below shows how important it is to remove any combustible materials from your garden to reduce this risk.

Remove combustible materials

By removing anything flammable, like dry grass or piles of rubbish, you're removing fuel for any wildfires.

- Keep grass cut short (below 7cm).
- Consider cutting back trees and shrubs that are close to your home. Dispose of your garden waste responsibly.
- If possible create a fire break around your property. You can do this by clearing 2-3m around all sides of your home and garden.
- Clear flammable debris, like dead leaves, from your garden and guttering.
- Try to position any sheds or garden furniture away from your home.
- Keeping your garden watered in dry spells makes it less combustible. If a hosepipe ban is in place, consider using water butts or wastewater from your home to water your garden.

Compost heaps

Compost heaps can be a source of grass fires, so if you have one in your garden or allotment, follow the advice below:

- Keep compost heaps, as well as any flammable material, away from buildings and other structures.



Bonfires We attend lots of out-of-control bonfires. Make sure your bonfire is safe.

Bonfires can be a fire risk, so we'd always recommend looking for alternative ways to get rid of your waste, but if you do have a bonfire, make sure you follow our safety tips.

Bonfire safety tips

- Build your bonfire well clear of buildings, garden sheds, fences and trees/hedges
- Never use flammable liquids (such as paraffin or petrol) to start a bonfire and never burn dangerous items such as aerosol cans, paint tins, foam furniture or batteries
- Always keep a bucket of water or a hosepipe nearby in case of fire
- Don't leave bonfires unattended. An adult should supervise it until it has burnt out. If it has to be left, damp it down with plenty of water
- Check the area to make sure there's no wildlife or pets hiding nearby
- Make sure the bonfire is out and surroundings are made safe before leaving.

Smoke from bonfires

If you're burning garden waste, remember that the greener the waste, the more smoke it produces. This may affect your neighbours, and even cause concerned citizens to call us to report a fire.

If you intend to have a bonfire to dispose of garden waste, alternatives to consider include composting, or using your local council's garden waste collection service instead.

STAY SAFE AND VIGILANT
Thank you all
Peter
Peter New. Community Neighbourhood Watch