

Ban placed on burning permits due to dry spring

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

With an unusually dry and windy spring, grass fires have been keeping the Milton Fire Department busy and a temporary ban has been placed on burning permits.

"The conditions are right for bad fires," said Fire Chief Larry Brassard of Milton Fire Department.

Over the past weekend alone, firefighters responded to six grass fires, most in rural Milton, with about 14 in the past week. It's quite a contrast to the situation last year, when residents were experiencing a wet spring season.

It's not known when the ban on burn permits, which came into effect Friday, will be lifted, Mr. Brassard said.

There are numerous causes of grass fires, including burning garden waste in the spring.

"It's safe to say some are started by people burning, some are

"The warm weather and winds can expedite the spread of fires that seem to start off small, but can quickly grow out of control."

BARRY KORY

from kids vandalizing and some are from carelessly discarded cigarette butts," Mr. Brassard said, urging residents to be extra cautious.

Grass fires pose a serious threat to residents' and firefighters' safety, he said, and shouldn't be taken lightly. Some take several hours to put out, stretching thin department resources and firefighters' energy — particularly when two or three fires are burn-

ing at the same time.

"It degrades our ability to respond to real emergencies," Mr. Brassard said.

Training technician Barry Kory emphasized the importance of being extremely careful when burning yard waste at any time, but especially in the spring.

"At this time of year, when the snow has melted and grass is extremely dry, the public must be vigilant when doing yard cleanup and burning off brush," he said. "The warm weather and winds can expedite the spread of fires that seem to start off small, but can quickly grow out of control."

For now, firefighters are hoping for rain, Mr. Kory said.

"We're hoping for nice, rainy weather, which nobody wants."

Burning in Ontario is strictly prohibited without a permit from the local fire chief, Mr. Brassard said. Under normal conditions, residents in rural Milton can apply for a burn permit, but this option isn't available to residents living in town, where open air burning of any type — including in chimeneas — is prohibited.

In anticipation of permits soon being issued once again, Mr. Brassard is reminding rural residents there are numerous limits that go along with a fire permit, including burning only clean objects such as wood or brush, not items like shingles or garbage.

Although burning's never 100 per cent safe even when taking precautions, Mr. Brassard said it's part of the rural way of life for many people.

"People are going to burn, so we want them to burn safely."

Stephanie Thiessen can be reached at sthiessen@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Fire stations taking food bank donations

Looking for an easy way to help others?

The Milton Fire Department has announced two of its stations are now official drop-off spots for food for the Salvation Army's Milton food bank.

Residents can now drop food off at the central station on Steeles Avenue or the Campbellville station on Reid Sideroad. Both locations have food collection drums in the lobbies.

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