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Don't Let Fire Reap its Harvest

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- When harvesting, begin on the down wind side of the field. If a fire starts, most of the valuable crop will have been removed from the path of the fire.
- Use every precaution when smoking. Mount ashtrays in equipment and use them.
- Use care when making welding repairs on equipment in the field. Have a bucket of water available.

Avoid Losses to Hay

- Avoid baling or stacking hay at a time of high moisture content to avoid spontaneous combustion.
- When baling hay, watch for sticks, etc., that hang up in large round bales. These may rub against the belts and cause a friction fire.
- Stack hay or pile large bales east to west (across the wind) not north to south (with the wind).
- During dry periods, spray the area around hay stacks and bale piles with a retardant. Use 10-34-0 liquid fertilizer (mix four parts water to one part fertilizer). Spray ground lightly — this will be effective until it rains. In those areas where you can safely disturb the soil surface, remove combustibles by discing or blading a strip to store your bales on.

Farm Equipment Fires Can Be Prevented!

For more information

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Photos courtesy University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Nebraska Forest Service

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Nebraska Forest Service

Don't Let Fire

Reap its Harvest

RFP07-07

University of Nebraska

Did You Know?

From 2000-2006, there were 9,806 wildfires in Nebraska, resulting in 543,960 burned acres. These wildfires cost Nebraska taxpayers more than $8 million. This includes estimated losses of nearly $1 million to crops and more than $7 million to improvements. Only 1,279 of these fires were non-preventable lightning fires.

Of the wildfires during this time period, 1,362 were caused by equipment, resulting in more than $300,000 in crop losses and more than $2 million in damages to improvements. These wildfires could have been prevented with a little education and effort.

Each year farmers and ranchers insure their crops against loss due to wind, hail, insects and disease, yet they fail to concern themselves with the potential losses from wildfires. Most wildfires occur in rural areas of Nebraska and are the result of carelessness. Fires can be prevented by the farmer and rancher.

Harvest Fire Prevention Tips

- Keep equipment in good running condition. This will reduce carbon build up and increase engine efficiency and fuel economy.
- Keep moving parts lubricated and fluids at their prescribed levels.
- Use a good grade of fuel.
- Use only approved fuel containers.
- Shut off the engine and allow equipment to cool down before refueling.
- Don't overfill fuel tanks.
- Keep the exhaust system in good condition. Inspect it for cracks, loose connections and broken brackets.
- In addition to a good exhaust system, a spark arrester can be installed to catch burning particles. They are easy to install and require little maintenance.
- Don't allow plant residue to build up around the exhaust system, engine or running parts of the equipment.

- One very common way for dry grass, corn stubble or other plant residue to ignite and burn is by coming in contact with hot exhaust system surfaces. Manifolds and exhaust pipes can reach temperatures of 500°F to 1000°F. Catalytic converters reach temperatures of 1400° to 1600°F. Heat shields get hot enough to start fires.
- Don't allow farm machinery or vehicles to idle for extended periods of time in tall grass or standing crops. Dry grass will ignite after only two minutes of contact with a surface heated to 500°F and will ignite instantly upon contact with a surface heated to 1000°F.
- Keep chains and belts on machinery well adjusted to prevent sparking and slippage.
- Repair all frayed or broken electrical wires.
- Keep fire extinguishers (10 lb. ABC) on each piece of farm equipment. Keep additional firefighting tools such as rakes, shovels and water close by.