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## EC86-1758 Don't Let Fire Reap its Harvest

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Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service  
EC 86-1758

# Don't Let Fire Reap Its Harvest

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work,  
Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the  
U.S. Department of Agriculture. Leo E. Lucas, Director of  
Cooperative Extension Service, University of Nebraska,  
Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



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# **DON'T LET FIRE REAP ITS HARVEST**

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**Eric J. Rasmussen**  
**Rural Fire Training Officer**

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Between 1980 and 1987 there were 12,227 wildfire incidents resulting in the burning of 258,070 acres of land in the State of Nebraska.

Wildfire cost the taxpayers of the State of Nebraska an estimated \$13,105,151 during this period.

This amount included an estimated loss of \$6,155,873 to crops and improvements and an estimated cost of suppression of these wildfires at \$6,485,037.

Of the 12,227 wildfires reported, only 1,055 were non-preventable and those were the lightning caused wildfires accounting for a loss of 104,846.89 acres and a monetary cost of \$2,302,919.

All of the other wildfires could have been prevented with a little education and effort on the part of the residents of the State of Nebraska.

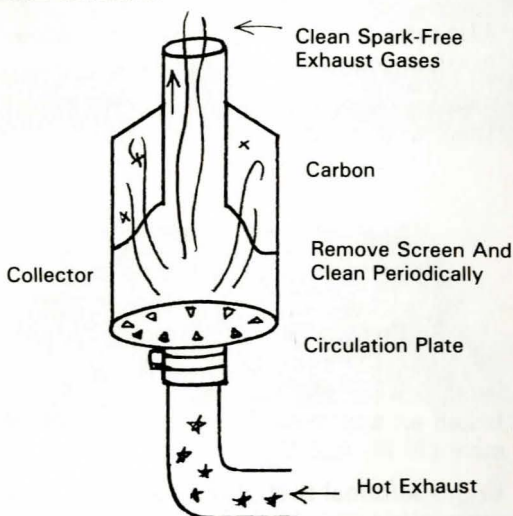
Each year farmers and ranchers pay to insure their crops against loss due to wind, hail, insects and disease and yet they fail to concern themselves with the potential losses from wildfire. Most wildfires occur in the rural areas of Nebraska and are the results of carelessness. Fires can be prevented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

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## Harvest Fire Prevention Tips

- Keep equipment tuned up and 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.
- Don't allow oil and grease to build up on equipment.
- Use a good grade of fuel.
- Use only safety approved fuel containers.
- Shut off the engine and allow equipment to cool down before refueling. (Don't overfill)
- 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 low maintenance. (see drawing above)

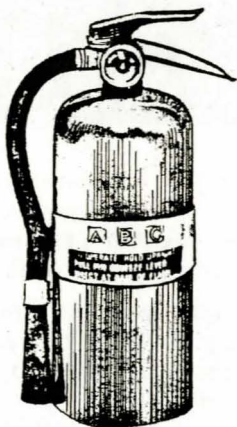
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- Don't allow pieces of plant material to build up around the exhaust system, engine, or moving parts of the equipment.

One very common way for dry grass, corn, stubble, or other plant material to ignite and burn is for it to come in contact with hot exhaust system surfaces.

Manifolds and exhaust pipes can reach temperatures of 500°F. to 1000°F. Catalytic convertors reach temperatures of 1400°F. to 1600°F. (Heat shields get hot enough to start fires.)

Dry grass will ignite after only two minutes of contact with a surface heated to 500°F. and will ignite instantly upon contacting a surface heated to 1000°F.

- Don't allow farm machinery and vehicles to idle for extended periods of time in tall grass or standing crops.
- Keep chains and belts on machinery well adjusted to prevent sparking and slippage.
- Repair all frayed or broken electrical wires.
- Keep fire extinguishers on each piece of field equipment.





- 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 up against the belts and cause a friction fire.
- To avoid a high loss in hay stacks or piled baled hay at the time of a fire, follow some simple rules.

**Place large round bales in a manner that will prevent fire spread.**



**NO**



**YES**

20 ft  
minimum

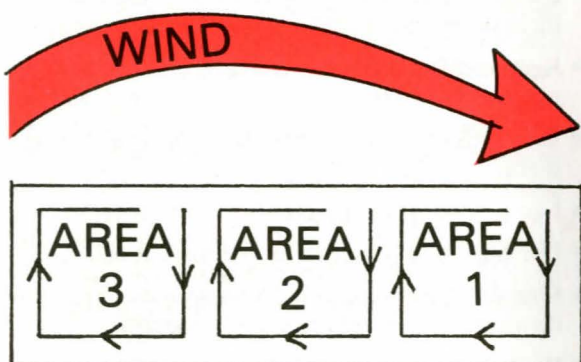
**NO**



- 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. (10-34-0 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 combustible by disking or blading a strip to store your bales on.

- 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 ash-trays in equipment and **use** them.
- Use care when making welding repairs on equipment in the field.

## FIRES CAN BE PREVENTED

—Equipment Fires are Preventable with Forethought and Care—

- Install an approved fire extinguisher on equipment (10 lb. A.B.C.)
- Keep additional firefighting tools such as rakes, shovels and water close by.



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