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Subject: Preventing Equipment Fires

How can you reduce the risk of a combine fire?

- Clean Equipment Daily
- Routine Maintenance
- Refueling & Storage
- Be Prepared

Sources:

Maryland Cooperative Extension

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Preventing Equipment Fires

Extreme dry field conditions bring the danger of equipment fires. Dry crop residue provides the tinder, and a small spark or heat source is all that is necessary for a fire to start. With a large amount of fuel and grain onboard, a combine fire can quickly lead to lost time, substantial property damage and severe injury or loss of life.

HOW CAN YOU REDUCE THE RISK OF A COMBINE FIRE? Prevention is essential! The old saying, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” really holds true.

CLEAN EQUIPMENT DAILY

Use a pressure washer or a compressed air blowgun to thoroughly clean and remove dust, dirt, grease, and crop residues from your equipment. Many farmers also find hand held gas powered leaf blowers useful for cleaning equipment in the field. Not only will you have eliminated the “tinder” from which a fire can start, but you will have equipment that will run cooler and more efficiently. Before you start, regardless of how busy you may be, take the time to keep your equipment clean.



PAY ATTENTION TO ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Check lubricant levels often and grease fittings regularly. Fix leaking exhaust, oil, fuel or hydraulic lines promptly. Check belts for proper tension and wear to reduce friction. Carefully check bearings for excessive heat—overheated bearings are a major cause of combine fires. Pay particular attention to the exhaust system, checking for leaks, damage, or an accumulation of crop residue. High heat or a spark from exhaust can easily ignite tinder.

REFUELING & STORAGE

Before refueling, always shut off the engine and let the equipment cool for 15 minutes. Extinguish all smoking materials and other flame sources. Wipe off any excess, or spilled fuel and allow fumes to dissipate. Store flammable liquids in an approved container. When the day's work is done, let the combine cool down outside, away from combustibles and other equipment. The few extra minutes spent being safe are insignificant compared to the potential property damage and/or injury that can occur.

BE PREPARED

Experts recommend that at least one fully charged 10lb ABC fire extinguisher be carried on all equipment. Better yet, carry two: one in the cab and one where it can be reached from the ground. Keep a cellular telephone with you and call 911 immediately!

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