

Practical Safety and Loss Prevention

From Central Illinois Mutual Insurance Company

Preventing Farm Machinery Fires

Fires in farm machinery, especially combines, are a reality in farming. Fires can interrupt your farm operations. Fire can also spread to nearby crops, homes, and buildings. This can lead to harvesting delays, lost revenue, and loss of farm and personal property.

More importantly, farm equipment fires can lead to injury or death. As a mutual insurance company, we believe it is in everyone's best interests to work together to prevent machinery fires, not only to reduce claim payments, but to protect the health and safety of our mutual members.

While it may not be possible to prevent every fire, below are some commonsense actions you can take to reduce the chance of a fire in your farm machinery.

Keep It Clean

- Use a pressure washer or compressed air to clean dust, dirt, and crop residue from your equipment, especially in hot zones around the engine, exhaust, belts, bearings, and other moving parts. Also keep areas around fuel tanks and lines clean.
- In the field, carry a gas-powered leaf blower with you or in the service truck. Stop periodically to blow out chaff, straw, corn fodder, and leaves.
- Keeping your equipment clean will also help it run cooler and more efficiently.
- Wipe up gas and oil spills immediately. Discard rags in an enclosed metal container.

Routine Maintenance

- Check bearings and other moving parts for signs of overheating or damage, such as discoloration, loss of grease, or damaged seals. Replace or re-lube as necessary.
- Check the wiring system for loose connections and insulation that has been worn, damaged, or possibly chewed by rodents. Make necessary repairs using properly sized wire with heat-resistant insulation. Route wiring to avoid heat sources or moving parts.
- A blown fuse indicates an electrical fault in the system. Locate and correct the electrical problem. Never install a higher rated fuse to compensate.
- Keep lubricants and hydraulic fluids at optimum levels.
- Check fuel tanks as well as fuel, oil, and hydraulic lines and fittings for leaks. Repair leaks immediately. Not tomorrow or the next rainy day. Do it now.
- Check belts for wear and proper tension. Replace or adjust as needed.
- Check the exhaust system for leaks or damage. Repair as necessary to prevent heat or sparks from igniting crop residue, and to prevent fumes from entering the cab during operation.
- Make sure all guards and covers are properly installed. Never disable or by-pass safety equipment. It is there for a reason.
- Follow all of your equipment manufacturer's safety and maintenance recommendations.

Practical Safety and Loss Prevention

From Central Illinois Mutual Insurance Company

Preventing Farm Machinery Fires

Don't Be A Fool When You Refuel

- Turn off the engine and allow it to cool for at least 15 minutes before refueling. *(This is a good time for you to cool down, too!)*
- Never smoke while refueling or around flammable liquids. Store flammable liquids only in approved containers.
- Keep fuel and equipment away from flames, sparks, and other ignition sources.
- Immediately wipe up any fuel spilled on equipment. Discard rags in an enclosed metal container.
- During this downtime is also a good opportunity to blow out crop residue.

Cool It

- Before you put your combine to bed for the night, let it cool down and keep an eye on it until you retire for the evening.
- Watch and smell for any signs of smoke, smoldering, or overheating.

Just In Case

- Keep your cell phone or two-way radio handy to call 9-1-1 in the event of a fire. Position yourself or a helper along the road to direct the fire department.
- After you have called 9-1-1, you can attempt to extinguish smaller fires. Keep at least one fully charged ABC fire extinguisher on board. A second extinguisher accessible from the ground is also recommended.
- Learn to use your fire extinguisher *before* you need it. Pull the pin. Aim at the base of the fire. Squeeze the handles together to start the flow of material. Sweep from side-to-side. P.A.S.S.—Pull. Aim. Squeeze. Sweep.
- Have extinguishers inspected annually by a professional fire extinguisher company. Have even partially discharged extinguishers recharged. You do not want to find out your extinguishers don't work at the time you need them most.
- If the fire is out of control, quickly move away from the machinery and wait for the fire department.



Kernel Safety says:

Only

YOU

can prevent combine fires!