

September 21, 2018

## SAFETY TIPS FOR HARVEST

With fall harvest already started and some dust starting to fly, let's cover some main issues with farm safety. While getting the crop in is your first priority, please don't make safety your second priority.

John Wilson, co-worker in Burt County, is also a volunteer firefighter and EMT for almost 36 years. He says each fall calls increase, largely due to field fires during harvest. Combines can present unique problems. To stay safe from fires, combine operators should check for the following:

- 1) Build-up of combustible crop residue around the engine and exhaust system.
- 2) Concealed drive belts and pulleys which can overheat due to friction when there is an accumulation of crop residue around them.
- 3) Electrical wiring and connectors that have become worn or frayed, resulting in sparks which can ignite grain dust, crop residues or fuel vapors.

Preventative maintenance is key to preventing many of the fires that occur on farm equipment. Keep all bearings and gears well lubricated to prevent heat buildup and keep lubricants at proper levels. Repair any leaks in the fuel system and any damaged electrical wiring. Repair or replace damaged or worn out exhaust systems. In addition to a good exhaust system, a spark arrestor can be installed to catch burning particles. The arrestors are easy to install and require little maintenance.

Please follow these safety practices:

- Never refuel equipment with the engine running. Always shut the engine off.
- Fuel before you start or allow hot engines to cool 15 minutes before refueling.
- Extinguish all smoking materials before refueling.
- If fuel spills on an engine, wipe away any excess and allow the fumes to dissipate before starting the engine. Gas fumes are heavier than air and can accumulate in pocket areas.

Always carry two fire extinguishers on the combine, one in the cab and one that you can access from the ground. Also carry a fire extinguisher in your grain hauling equipment. Always carry a cell phone or alternative for communicating with others in case of an emergency.

If a field or equipment fire does occur, call 911 before trying to extinguish it yourself. Have a tractor hooked to a disk near the field you are harvesting, but located where it wouldn't be affected if a field fire should occur. If using a fire extinguisher, stay between the fire and your path to safety.

When using a fire extinguisher, remember to PASS. P-A-S-S stands for Pull, Aim, Squeeze and Sweep.

**P**ull the safety pin on the extinguisher, **A**im at the base of the fire, **S**queeze the handle and **S**weep the extinguisher back and forth while releasing the contents.



Be careful backing up pickups, trucks, tractors and combines in the field and always watch out for others and keeping children away. A lot of injuries or deaths can occur with harvest equipment when moving and not aware of someone. Watch out for those dangerous intersections and be prepared for higher rural farm traffic. Make sure all shields are on PTO's and grain augers, they are rattlesnakes ready to kill after grabbing on to feet, arms, loose clothing, long hair, strings on sweatshirts, etc.

Wear that grain mask. There is mold in some of the grain this year and take steps to prevent Farmer's Lung. Your body's last defense are cold like or pneumonia like symptoms when exposed to too much grain dust and mold. Take breaks as necessary.

Following these safety tips can seem like common sense, but with the long hours and the rush to get harvest done, sometimes these are forgotten. Please have a safe and good harvest season!

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County • 306 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Wilber, NE 68465

Phone (402) 821-2151 • Fax (402) 821-3398 • e-mail: [randy.pryor@unl.edu](mailto:randy.pryor@unl.edu)