

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Information and advice for Agricultural
Machinery owners to help reduce Fires



Enabling our rural communities
to lead safe and healthy lives





Intro

Agricultural machinery and vehicles can be vulnerable to fire during Harvest due to the nature of the work and the long operating hours. The risk can be heightened when ambient temperatures become excessive. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are working with the agricultural community and vehicle manufacturers to provide awareness and support to landowners and machine operators around how to keep your vehicles and equipment as safe as possible during Harvest. The below points provide simple advice and guidance for farmers and operators.





Pre Harvest

- Consider the use of the location finding App – What3words – does your farm team have it on their mobile device?
- Do you know the location of hydrants that may be currently hidden in undergrowth or debris?
- Check your “on machine” fire extinguishers – when were they last inspected/serviced? – for seasonal use machines, they may have been OK when checked during winter maintenance but are they still ok now, months later?
- Consider cleaning the machines thoroughly before harvest commences – a clean machine at the start is much easier to keep clean and takes much less time to keep it like that when the busy period is in full swing. After washing, grease the machine and lubricate chains where required. The let the machine run for some time allow air to circulate and dry. Pay particular attention to hard-to-reach areas – all around the ground drive gearbox, under and around the engine – especially on the grain tank side and on top and behind fuel tanks.
- Due to remote harvesting locations, consider if you can create a basic “Mobile Water Supply” that can be relocated close to the area the machine is working? A 1000l IBC with a 3” – 4” hose strapped to a trailer can be enough to prevent a situation getting out of control, but only when safe to do so. If in doubt call 999.
- Ensure you are familiar with the operators manual for your machine. Contact your dealer for operator training options if you are new to the machine/model type.
- Consider your “Farm Emergency Plan”. Do temporary staff know what to do and where everything is, in the event of an incident?





During Harvest

- Don't skip daily maintenance checks. Even when the machine has automatic lubrication systems installed, a thorough, visual walk-around inspection can pick up topics that are easily resolved, that could have developed into a downtime situation.
- Clean your windows, mirrors, and camera lenses to ensure you can always see around your machine.
- Look for drive belts with frayed edges, discoloured paint on belt guides, pulleys and bearing housings – this could indicate that further attention/repair is required. Is there crop wrapped around components that could cause friction?
- Do not over fill fuel and Ad-Blue tanks. Remember, hydraulic oil expands with work – ensure the levels are checked with the machine in the correct position according to your operators manual. Spilt fluids attract dust build up – often in hard to clean areas.
- Manufacturers go to great lengths to reduce dust build up on machines, but the harvesting process is often different from year to year. Take the opportunity to clean the machine with compressed air daily but be prepared to repeat this process more frequently if the local conditions dictate – for example, where two machines run together in close proximity – Big balers and combines for example.
- Most guards with “quick release” fixings are, by design, supposed to be opened regularly for cleaning and inspection!
- If your route to the fields involves passing under overhanging trees etc, take time to check the machine before commencing field work. Broken sticks and branches can damage wiring and cause exhaust protection or insulation to be dislodged. This should always be rectified before commencing work.
- Take care not to overfill the grain tank!. Spilt grain attracts further dust and material build up which could ignite on hot components.





After Harvest

- Don't just abandon the machine. Blow the machine down – ideally with the support of a road compressor, as a minimum. If regular daily cleaning has been done this task does not take long.
- Consider asking your dealer if they offer a "Pack-Away" service for your machine at the end of harvest.
- If you experienced a "near miss" during harvest. What lessons could be learned and what could be implemented for next harvest?

Contact our Prevention team on **01473 260588** for free Fire safety advice or visit our website **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service - Suffolk County Council** to access our free information leaflets.

