

Farm Fires

Each year in Canada, there are approximately 800 fire-related deaths. Many of these occur on farms.

Fires on farms pose a special threat because most farmers are far from fire-fighting equipment and lack the water needed to extinguish fires. The economic and personal losses are severe and proportionally higher than those from fires in urban areas.

Safety Rules

- Never permit smoking in barns or near any flammable materials.
- Never refuel engines inside a building or while the engine is hot or running.
- Avoid spontaneous combustion in hay by ensuring that it is properly dried before putting it in the barn.
- Ensure that all electrical installations and wiring are inspected and approved by the hydro authority.
- Only burn rubbish in an incinerator equipped with a spark arrestor. The incinerator should be located 30 metres from any major buildings.
- Attach lightning rods to all major buildings.
- Equip crop dryers with controls that will automatically shut off blowers or dampers when they get too hot.
- Label and store pesticides in a separate building.
- Never store fuel inside a building.
- Never burn your field.

Fire-emergency Procedure

- When a fire breaks out in a house or farm building, everyone must be evacuated from the

building immediately.

- Normal exits may be blocked, so you must have emergency exits.
- Close all the doors and windows as you escape the fire; failure to do so may cause air drafts which will fan the fire.
- When everyone is out of the building, call Ottawa Fire Services. Give them your name, address, and the exact location of the fire.
- Never allow anyone to re-enter a burning building.

The following fire safety checklist was designed to assist farmers to reduce the risk of fire occurring on their properties. It will also ensure everyone knows what to do in case of fire.

Use this checklist by placing checkmarks in appropriate boxes to ensure important steps have been taken to make your farms and homes safer from fire.

CONTACTING EMERGENCY SERVICES

Knowing how to contact emergency services and being able to direct them to the right place will avoid unnecessary delays in response time.

- Prominently post the fire department phone number (or 9-1-1) at each telephone.
- Prominently post clear, concise directions to your property at each telephone. This will allow you to provide clear instructions to responding emergency services.
- Make sure your neighbors know the address of your farm property and any important information about your farm and the buildings.

It is often a neighbor who will notice smoke or flames coming from nearby barns or buildings. Making sure that neighbors have

your correct address can save valuable time for the emergency responders in rural areas.

INSPECT YARD AREAS

Keeping a clean, clear space around buildings and in general yard areas can help reduce the risk of fire spreading from one building to another.

- Remove combustible materials (general storage/new or salvaged building materials) from around buildings.
- Remove brush, weeds, and tall grass from around buildings.

PROVIDE ACCESS FOR FIREFIGHTING

Ensuring firefighters can access all areas of your property and can gain access to all buildings will avoid costly delays once they arrive.

- Provide and maintain a clear unobstructed laneway or yard area to each building. Park farm equipment and machinery in the barn or equipment shed, if possible.
- Provide gateways through fences with a clear width of at least 3.5 metres for fire department vehicles and apparatus.
- Provide clear access to water supplies that might be required for firefighting (i.e., wells, cisterns, ponds, streams etc.).
- Maintain wells and pumps used for farm water supply.

CONTROL HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

Following safety precautions is important when handling hazardous products. Ensure all hazardous products are clearly labeled to further eliminate guesswork in an emergency situation.

- Store hazardous products according to manufacturer's recommendations and applicable regulations.
- Mix fertilizers and chemicals carefully in well-ventilated areas. Have materials on hand to clean up spills immediately.
- Protect cylinders containing compressed gases from mechanical damage to the valves and the cylinders.
- Perform welding and cutting operations only in areas that are free of combustible materials.

CONTROL IGNITION SOURCES

Understanding how to prevent fires from starting is essential in protecting your farm from fire loss.

- Strictly enforce a 'NO SMOKING' policy in and around all farm buildings.
- Keep engines, motors and machinery well maintained to prevent malfunction and overheating.
- Refuel equipment outdoors.
- Make sure equipment is turned off and allowed to cool before refueling.
- Maintain adequate clearance to combustibles around heaters.

INSTALL PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

The reality of agricultural fires is the distance that firefighters must physically travel to respond. Reduce the risk of fire loss on your property by developing fire protection measures to extinguish or control a fire until firefighters can arrive.

- Install fire extinguishers in your barn, tool shed, and other farm buildings.
- Install multi-purpose fire extinguishers on tractors, combines, and other mechanical equipment and machinery.
- Make sure family members and employees know where extinguishers are located and how to use them.
- Maintain your extinguishers by inspecting them regularly and recharge when necessary. If you have water type fire extinguishers, protect them from freezing.

MAINTAIN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Electricity can provide a dangerous supply of safety hazards that can hinder operations and ultimately start a fire.

- Use stall fans, space heaters, lights, and radios only when someone is in the barn.
- Use only listed electrical appliances and equipment.
- Disconnect or unplug electrical equipment and appliances when not in use.
- Enclose exposed wiring in barns and tool sheds in conduit to protect against exposure to weather, animals, and mechanical damage.
- Ensure electrical repairs and installations are performed by qualified electricians.

FIRE SAFETY PLANNING

A customized fire safety plan can work to your advantage in a fire. Develop a fire safety plan for your farm to reduce fire loss. Fire safety planning starts with you.

- Identify exits and possible evacuation

routes from all areas of barns and farm buildings. Ensure all family members and employees are familiar with these evacuation routes.

- Make necessary arrangements to house livestock in the event they need to be evacuated from the barn in a fire. If you do not have suitable areas on your property where you can contain and control your animals, you may need to consider making arrangements with neighboring farmers.
- Maintain an identification list of all animals on your farm including pertinent details about their health (i.e. any vaccinations they have received, medication they may require) and any physical characteristics."
- Review the plan with all family members and employees and update your plan regularly to accommodate changes to the buildings, livestock or employees.