



SAFETY ALERT

Tractor mower fire

Name:

Date Read:

WHAT HAPPENED

A tractor being used for mowing caught on fire when trapped dry grass and leaves ignited between the sump guarding and the exhaust system. The farm worker driving the tractor noticed smoke coming from the front, and got off the tractor to try to remove the debris. Unfortunately this made the fire grow because of the extra oxygen. The worker tried to extinguish the fire but wasn't able to, and the tractor was destroyed. It was far enough away from other people and structures, so the harm was to the tractor only.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN

Exhaust system heat was fueled by built up dry grass and caused a fire. It accelerated because more oxygen was introduced when the worker tried to put out the fire without an extinguisher. Even though pre-start checks and SWPs (safe work procedures) were completed before the tractor was used, the dry grass build up wasn't noticed.

KEY LESSONS

Key lessons:

- Every time you go to use machinery, make sure you do a thorough pre-start and post-operational check, including removing any dry grass or debris before and after use.
- Make sure anyone working on farm knows how to conduct these checks, and what they need to look for and remove, especially with seasonal changes.
- Monitor the vehicle's temperature gauge while driving.
- Stop work immediately if smoke or fire is detected and move to a safe distance if the fire cannot be safely controlled. Machinery fires escalate rapidly. Personal safety must always come first.
- Fire extinguishers need to be tested at least once every 12 months to stay compliant with New Zealand safety standards. Make sure that any fire extinguishers that are fitted to machinery, are fit for purpose and are suitable for machinery fires.
- All people onsite should know where the extinguisher is, and how to use it.



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