



Montana/Dakota's Safety and Fire Alert



The recent hot temperatures coupled with this spring's moisture have resulted in an abundance of tall vegetation which is rapidly curing. We are especially concerned about the accidental start of fires due to vegetation accumulating in vehicle skid plates and catalytic converters. Driving on two-tracks or roads with vegetation around them or in the middle of the tracks can and does cause fires!! Your safety is of most importance. Please take the time to do the following:

1. When possible, avoid taking vehicles off roads or on roads with tall vegetation in the middle. If you must drive off road or on vegetated roads, you'll need to clean out the undercarriage/skid plate **often**.
2. Avoid parking over dry grass and other vegetation. Each day, prior to going to the field, vehicle undercarriages and skid plates must be inspected and cleaned of vegetation. When parking in the field, inspect undercarriages.
3. All field-going vehicles should carry a fire extinguisher, shovel, water, and radio/cell phone communications.

If a fire starts, you need to use good judgment on whether the fire is small and you can easily put it out with a shovel or water or fire extinguisher. Know when to back off and do not attempt to put out a vehicle fire if it starts to burn. If you are able (cell phone or portable radio), contact fire dispatch and your supervisor. You need to leave the area and find a safe location away from the vehicle if it catches on fire, such as a barren dirt area or a cleared road or rocky area until other resources arrive. Remember to take plenty of drinking water and snacks in case you get stranded for a while.

Offices or group should discuss this issue at upcoming tailgate sessions, staff meetings, or all employee meetings. The following link leads to a helpful powerpoint put together by the HiLine Safety Committee: <http://web.mt.blm.gov/staff/Websters/safety/motorvehicle.html> (Scroll down and click on **Vehicle Converter** powerpoint under Vehicle Safety Tips – how to prevent vehicle undercarriage fires).



This vehicle ignited due to vegetation on the undercarriage. The passengers did not have time to get their personal items out of the vehicle, but, thankfully, there were no injuries (July 2011).