



## Best practice for harvesting during periods of wildfire risk

The purpose of this best practice advice is to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition and spread during harvesting operations in high fire risk periods.

### When to act

Implement these measures in hot, dry, windy conditions when the risk of ignition and rapid spread of fire is high.

#### 1. Start harvesting from the downwind edge

Starting from the downwind edge ensures that any fire caused by machinery spreads into already harvested areas and not standing crops.

- Determine wind direction before harvesting.
- Work into the wind to reduce risk of fire spread.

#### 2. Harvest headlands first

Clearing a perimeter swathe around the field before moving into the centre can slow fire spread.

Benefits:

- Slows fire spread.
- Improves access for emergency vehicles.
- Helps form a containment line.

#### 3. Plough or disc behind the harvester

On very dry and windy days, consider using a tractor and plough or disc cultivator to follow the harvester around the headland to create a bare-earth firebreak.

- Do this immediately after harvesting outer edges
- Creates a physical barrier to fire spread

#### 4. Keep fire suppression equipment on site

Equip harvest teams with:

- A tractor with water bowser.
- At least one fire extinguisher on each machine.
- Radio or mobile phone for emergency communications.

## **5. Check and clean machinery daily**

- Remove crop dust and straw build-up from engines and bearings.
- Check for hot spots or faulty wiring.
- Avoid metal-to-stone contact where possible.

## **6. Work in teams where possible**

- Have a second operator with a plough, disc, or bowser on standby where possible.
- Rotate tasks and maintain constant lookout for smoke or heat.

## **7. Communicate with neighbours and responders**

- Inform nearby landowners when harvesting in high-risk areas.
- Know how to report fire quickly, call 999 and ask for the fire service.
- Use GPS location apps such as what3words to help fire and rescue services locate field entrances.

## **Summary checklist**

Harvest starts from downwind side

Headlands harvested first

Plough follows combine on headland

Fire suppression tools on site

Machinery inspected & cleaned

Team briefed and contactable

