

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: UTV Fire

Date: February 9, 2022

Location: Red Rio Prescribed Fire,
New Mexico

Lessons from Operating UTVs in Tall Grass

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Narrative

Our Red Rio Prescribed Fire unit consisted of tall grass, brush and sparse juniper.

While traveling through the unit in the UTV, I had to drive over tall grass and brush. There were three of us in the UTV on this patrol, and we were not aware that some of the vegetation had become wedged between the UTV's bed and cab.

As I continued driving and patrolling the fire's edge, this wedged vegetation caught fire and melted a corner of the UTV's bed.

I smelled the melting plastic and quickly stopped the UTV.

I was able to remove the gear and lift the bed. Once the bed was lifted, it took very little effort to extinguish the melting plastic. Besides the damage to the plastic on the bed, the UTV is fully operational.



Lessons

- ❖ When driving UTVs in tall fuels, periodically check the vehicle for vegetation.
- ❖ A success regarding this incident is that we were able to safely and quickly extinguish the melting UTV.
- ❖ Moving forward, we will constantly check the UTV for vegetation when driving over tall grass and brush.

See more vegetation
accumulation lessons
from UTV fires
on next page.

Photos show
the melted plastic
burn damage
on the UTV.

Remember to Also Check for Vegetation Accumulation Under Your UTV's Floorboards

Besides vegetation accumulating between the UTV's bed and cab as occurred in this incident, vegetation can likewise accumulate under the UTV's floorboards—and eventually ignite.

The links to three of these floorboard fire incidents—and their lessons—are listed below.

As highlighted in the aftermath of this recent Red Rio Prescribed Fire UTV fire incident, the key lesson is to be checking your UTVs for vegetation accumulation everywhere.

- ❖ **Burn Unit 217 UTV Floorboard Fire RLS (2020)**
<https://lessons.wildfire.gov/incident/burn-unit-217-utv-fire-2020>
- ❖ **Moose Creek Rx UTV Floorboard Fire RLS (2017)**
<https://lessons.wildfire.gov/incident/moose-creek-rx-utv-floorboard-fire-2017>
- ❖ **Wichita Mountain NWR Polaris Flammable Debris RLS (2014)**
<https://lessons.wildfire.gov/incident/wichita-mountain-nwr-polaris-flammable-debris-2014>



Photos show the UTV fire from the 2020 “Burn Unit UTV Floorboard Fire RLS”—caused by vegetation accumulating and igniting under the UTV's floorboards.

This RLS was submitted by:

Jesse Holguin
Module/Crew Overhead

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