

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: ATV Near Miss with Fire

Date: February 25, 2023

Location: Red House/Crusher Prescribed Fire,
Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve,
Kansas

On Saturday, February 25, while nearing completion of blacklining, a lead igniter on a Honda ATV with a rear-mounted electronic torch, stalled out on rocks in tall grass while adding depth to blacklines on the west side of the unit.

The flashy fuels were actively heading and flanking away from the strip, leaving little time for the ATV operator to move the vehicle before it was impacted by the strip fire they had just lit.

Holding crews, located 30-40 yards away, saw the operator struggling with the machine and immediately sent three UTVs with water tanks and pumps to assist the operator.

This quick action minimized damage to the ATV. The operator was able to easily walk into lighter unburned fuels as the UTV crews arrived and the fire around the ATV was controlled. The ATV showed indications of some heat impact on the front and rear fender flairs (see photo on page 2) but was otherwise undamaged. After inspection by several personnel on the prescribed fire, the ATV was restarted and used to complete the firing operation.



ATV operator igniting a strip on the day of the incident.



Burn Day: 2/25/23

Size: 1,357 acres

Required Personnel: 16

On Site Personnel: 20, plus 2 information personnel

Required Equipment: 2 Type 6 Engines, 4 UTV/ATV

On Site Equipment: 3 Type 6 Engines, 11 UTV/ATV, 1 water tender

Damaged Equipment: 2020 Honda Rancher 4x4. 13 hrs. on the machine. Factory installed front rack (66-pound capacity) with user-installed 20-gallon agriculture tank and fire extinguisher mounted. Factory installed rear rack (133-pound capacity) with a user-installed 8-gallon Hayes Manufacturing Power Torch with handlebar mounted controls.

Extent of Damage: Classified as minor. Wheel flairs on the left side of the ATV show signs of heat damage such as wrinkling/bubbling of plastic.

Incident Location: The southwest corner of the prescribed fire unit.



Honda ATV involved in the near miss showing the tank configuration and location of heat damage (red circles).

Lessons

This Rapid Lesson Sharing document has been prepared to highlight key learning points from this near miss incident.

- ❖ Create time as part of briefings to familiarize operators with equipment that is new to them—even if it is similar to other equipment that they regularly use.
- ❖ Utilize “Risk Assessment Tools” and checklists to help quantify the level of risk expected during an operation. The use of these tools as part of “Go/No-Go” procedures leading up to ignitions can help to build broader understanding of risk across all functions within the burn organization.
- ❖ Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) are an important tool to increase safety by reducing fatigue and exposure to fire personnel and aviators.
- ❖ We have pride in working in a learning organization and reporting up is an important part of learning. Reporting near misses up our chain-of-command builds trust and understanding of risk within our organizations.

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