



# The Hot Sheet



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## LESSONS LEARNED: INDIAN SPRINGS REVISITED

With the 2015 fire season just around the corner, this is a good time to review an area that has raised concern over the last several fire seasons; hot saws. High speed rotary saw fires dominated the headlines in 2014 with eight reported fires that burned nearly 1,400 acres and exceeded \$4.6 million in suppression costs.

When reviewing the 2001 Indian Springs Fire, several key factors continue to resonate with similar fires that have occurred since. The following is an account of the Indian Springs Fire as told to OFIC's Mike Dykzeul by the operator for the June 2002 issue of the Industrial Fire Prevention Bulletin, this publication's predecessor.



How would you like to open an envelope and see a bill for \$3,744,000? Then the relief to see that, by doing everything right, the bill had been reduced to the \$300,000 limited liability.

The operator remembered that the weather conditions and rocky nature of the harvest site had made the crew very nervous. They had been using a Timco track harvester, but felt that the risk of track equipment sparking against the rocky terrain was too much. They instead rented a rubber tire hot saw to finish the unit.

At about 3:00 in the afternoon, the high speed rotary saw came into contact with a rock on the back side of a tree being cut. While the crew was within operating guidelines under high fire danger, they were conscious and concerned with the high temperatures and 6% humidity. The lesson eventually learned according to the operator was that common sense is a pretty good rule of thumb and that with several years of experience under your belt, it's a good idea to listen to your gut instincts.



"Those afternoon winds, nasty fuels and terrain made the fire spread awfully quick," remembers the operator. "We thought we had it corralled at one point, but those erratic winds kept it moving." The fire was less than 1/2 acre when fire crews arrived. But due to high winds, flashy fuels mixed with white fir, it eventually burned 1,624 acres and, as noted above, cost in excess of \$3.7 million to put out. About the only good news was that the operator followed the rules and was only liable for \$300,000 of extra fire suppression costs (outside district budgeted funds such as air tankers, helicopters and contract crews). Here are some additional thoughts provided by the operator.

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*The 2014 Bryant Fire burned 1361 acres.*



*The 2009 McGinnis Creek Fire burned 3,417 acres.*

- Weather: Be aware of the conditions of your unit such as temperature, humidity, fuel moisture and wind.
- Remember the minimum requirements for equipment are MINIMUMS. There is no harm in providing more or bigger.
- Have a swamper follow hot saws to cool down hot spots and stumps.
- Water (hose) should reach all areas where equipment is working.
- Notify ODF of a fire as soon as possible. Even if you think your crew can contain the fire, the sooner help is on the way, the better. In addition, reporting all fires will help prevent future fires.
- Make sure crews are adequately trained. AOL and ODF provide OR-OSHA Basic Fire Suppression and Fire Shelter Training. Go the extra mile and incorporate periodic fire drills to make sure everyone knows their responsibility.

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This is all good information and actually mirrors recent large fires. The 2014 Bryant Fire resulted from a high speed rotary saw coming into contact with a rotten, cedar stump on an east facing slope. And although it was during moderate fire danger, rocky steep slopes filled with white fir, combined with erratic winds carried the fire beyond initial attack and eventually burned 1,361 acres at a cost of more than \$4.6 million. Again, the operator had followed all of the rules and was left with the \$300,000 limited liability bill.