

# SAFETY FIRST

INFORMATION DEDICATED TO DRIVER SAFETY



AHEAD OF  
THE CURVE



Safety Management  
Services Company, 2015

An affiliate of  
Cottingham & Butler

*Be Safe Out There*



## Prevent Vehicle Fires

### On the Road

Truck and trailer fires can be devastating with regard to property damage, environmental harm, loss of revenue, personal injury, and even death. Conducting comprehensive pre and post-trip inspections to include the inspections of fuel lines, hydraulic hoses, and the exhaust system are critical to help prevent vehicle fires. When conducting a vehicle inspection, look for warning signs which can include:

- Cracked or loose wiring or electrical problems, including a fuse that blows more than once.
- Oil or fluid leaks.
- Fuel, washer fluid, and oil caps not on securely.
- Rapid changes in fuel or fluid level, or engine temperature.

Statistically, vehicle fires most often result from mechanical or electrical malfunctions. Increasing your awareness of vehicle fire risks is key to fire prevention as well as knowing and practicing simple prevention strategies. The following is a list of common causes of vehicle fires:

- Dragging brakes can produce significant heat and may not be readily identifiable. A carefully inspected brake system can significantly reduce the risk of fire incidents.
- Hose or wiring insulation should be checked for cracking and general degradation. Emphasis should be placed on areas having direct contact with other objects.
- A blanket or a jacket covering a power inverter within the sleeper, especially when under load, can result in overheating and potentially a fire. Inverters and all aftermarket electrical equipment should be installed as safe as possible to prevent electrical cords from chafing or shorting out.
- Paper trash and other kinds of debris can cause a vehicle fire to spin out of control, so be sure to keep the interior of your vehicle free of paper and trash.
- Under inflated tires causes the casing of the tire to continually bend and flex, and, like a piece of metal bent back and forth, the tire becomes hotter and hotter until a fire breaks out.

Always be prepared by ensuring that your truck is equipped with a fully charged fire extinguisher and that you are familiar with how to use it.

### Fire Response

If you smell smoke or see flames, it is important to remain calm—but act quickly. If you are safely able to do so, move the vehicle to the side of the road or to a remote site. Turn off the ignition immediately to disconnect the electrical power and fuel supply. Set the parking brake to keep the vehicle from rolling. Get out of the vehicle and call 911 for assistance.

If the fire is under the hood, leave the hood closed, as this will limit the amount of oxygen the fire has to burn. Call 911.

If smoke is observed coming from an enclosed trailer, leave the doors closed and call 911 immediately. Do not open the trailer doors, as this gives the fire the oxygen it needs to grow in intensity. If it is safe to disconnect the tractor from the trailer, safely consider this option.

If the fire cannot be quickly contained, move far from the burning vehicle to avoid the flames and toxic fumes—at least 100 feet—and also keep bystanders back. Alert oncoming traffic if possible.



**Cottingham & Butler**  
TRANSPORTATION GROUP