

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Fire Ignites Under UTV Floorboard

**Date:** May 21, 2017

**Location:** Moose Creek Prescribed Fire, Alaska

*This Has Happened Before!*

*See Page 2 for Details.*

## NARRATIVE

While using a 2013 Polaris 6x6 UTV on a prescribed fire, an accumulation of fine fuels located in an enclosed compartment under the UTV's floorboard and above the skid plate ignited.

This fire melted a four-inch hole in the skid plate and floorboard and caused extensive damage to wiring and the gear selector cable. (See top photo on right.)

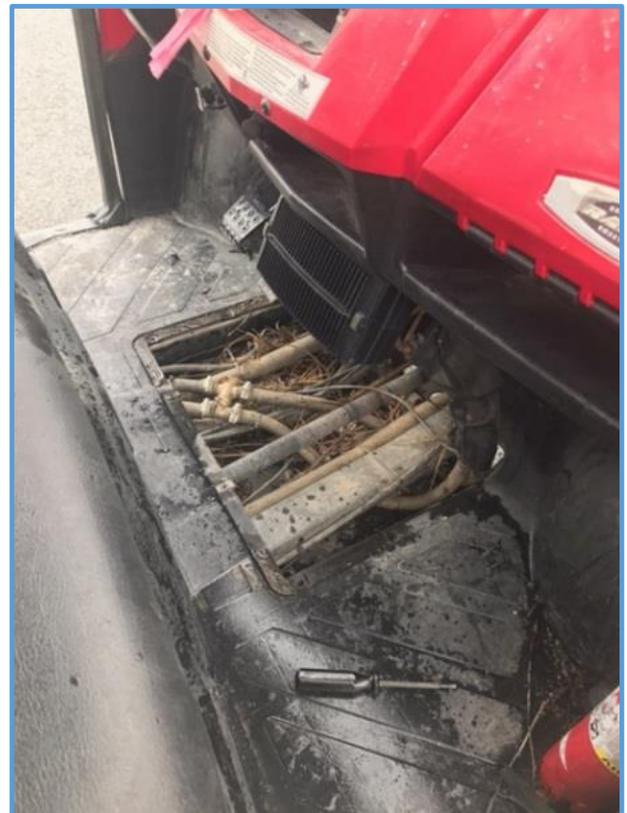
## LESSONS

- ✓ Periodically clean out under floorboards of UTVs.
- ✓ Standard operating procedures include hosing down the under carriage of UTVs after use.
- ✓ The compartment under the floorboards is not obvious and is not easily cleaned by daily washing.
- ✓ To thoroughly clean this compartment, the panel on the floorboard needs to be opened and cleaned out. (Need to remove the eight T-27 torx screws.)
- ✓ A contributing factor to this ignition of the fine fuels was the fact that they were operating in a dry site. Typically, spring burning in Alaska involves driving through puddles. The combination of accumulated fuels and these dry conditions made the fine fuels available to burn.
- ✓ Typically, UTVs function without damage driving through low-intensity flames.
- ✓ All UTVs on this unit will have an inspected and maintained fire extinguisher mounted on them.



**TOP PHOTO** – Shows the damage to the wiring and gear selector cable caused by the fire that occurred under the UTV's floorboard.

**BOTTOM PHOTO** – Shows some fine fuel accumulation under a companion UTV's floorboard.



**This RLS was submitted by:  
Module/Crew Overhead**

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## Two Previous Cases of Vegetation Accumulating Beneath Floor Panel/Skid Plate on UTVs

### Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Removing Combustible Debris Beneath Floor Plates on Polaris Rangers  
**Location:** Wichita Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Fire Shop – Oklahoma

**Narrative**  
Two weeks ago, our fire staff decided to add a small work light on the rear of our 2011 6x6 Polaris Ranger. When they removed the plastic floor panel to aid in pulling the new wire, they found that the entire compartment underneath the floor panel was completely full of cured grass, sticks, and other dead vegetation. Cleaned out before a picture of this debris was taken, it was described as looking “like a hay bale”.



Photo 1 (above) - Shows the access panel removed. You can see the front drive shaft, several wiring looms, and other plumbing running through the compartment. The areas circled in yellow are the places where the material was able to enter and get packed in under the floor board. On right, paint on the front drive shaft has been worn off from rubbing on the grass and sticks. The red arrow approximates the location of the fuel tank.





The material, packed in tightly, completely filled the compartment.

Although it doesn't appear that there is a potential ignition source under the floor board, given how these machines are operated, it would be very easy for an external ignition source to light the accumulated material—causing a fire that would be extremely hard to access and put out.

While the floor panel is plastic—and consequently flammable—the underside of the compartment is a metal skid plate that has a few factory holes. The location of this compartment puts it close to the fuel tank, located on the passenger side, also constructed of plastic. Should accumulated vegetation catch fire in there, it places a substantial ignition source close to the gas tank.

**Lessons**  
Our recommendation is to make removing the floor plate part of your vehicle inspections—and doing so at a minimum of once a month. Realistically, any time the vehicle has been driven in taller grass (1 to 2 feet)—that could be forced through the holes into the under-floor compartment—the access panel should be removed to clean out any material that has accumulated. This will

<https://www.wildfirelessons.net/viewdocument/polaris-flammable-debris-2014>

When they removed the plastic floor panel from their 6x6 Polaris Ranger UTV they found that the entire compartment underneath the floor panel was completely full of cured grass, sticks, and other dead vegetation.

Described as looking “like a hay bale,” the material—packed in tightly—completely filled the compartment.

Given how these machines are operated, it would be very easy for an external ignition source to light the accumulated material—causing a fire that would be extremely hard to access and put out.

[http://safenet.nifc.gov/view\\_safenet.cfm?id=36142&\\_ncforminfo=9tJAt0U5d\\_0NmR\\_i53ZA2fbyB-YY07SxROHDJ50h7GJw9D3Vym6JCCea1CDQbBlw36rySMZvnr16lugmRYDirzBGk9bq3yqT](http://safenet.nifc.gov/view_safenet.cfm?id=36142&_ncforminfo=9tJAt0U5d_0NmR_i53ZA2fbyB-YY07SxROHDJ50h7GJw9D3Vym6JCCea1CDQbBlw36rySMZvnr16lugmRYDirzBGk9bq3yqT)

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Past SAFENETs
Protocols
Form Field Definitions
FAQ
Contact
NIFC Home

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- Presentation
- Annual Summary

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- Paper Form
- Field Card Memo
- Field Card Form

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- Accessibility
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**SAFENET Event Information**

SAFENET ID: 20160707-0001

Event Start Date: 07/04/2016 1730

Event Stop Date: 07/04/2016 2230

Incident Name: Hagerman Fire

Fire Number: KD3Z

State: New Mexico

Jurisdiction: BLM

Local Unit: Pecos District

Incident Type: Wildland

Incident Activity: Line

Stage of Incident: Initial Attack

Position Title: Senior Firefighter

Task: Suppression

Management Level: 5

Resources Involved: UTV

**Contributing Factors**

Contributing Factors: Equipment, Environmental

Human Factors:

Possible vegetation lodged between skid plate and underbody ignited, burning a hole through floorboard on this 2009 Polaris Ranger 6X6 UTV.

Firefighter noticed flames protruding through the floorboard. A shovel with sand and the UTV fire extinguisher were used to suppress the flames.