

Mowers, Slashers and Fires

During the past couple of weeks at least 3 fires in the City of Swan have been caused by ride-on mowers or slashers. One of these was the fire near Aspen Rd, Gidge last Tuesday which burnt out nearly 40 Ha, threatened houses and took up to 50 firefighters at its height from as far away as Gosnells and Quinns Rock to contain, with 2 further days blackout and mopup. This fire broke out at approx 4 pm on a Very High Fire Danger day – you have to wonder!

Mowers and slashers cause fires primarily by

1. The blades striking a rock or bit of metal causing sparking
2. Accumulation of grass and seeds around hot spots such as exhausts

To minimise the risk

1. Avoid slashing during the hotter parts of the day. Doing it early in the morning and only on cooler days is safer so if a fire occurs it spreads slowly and can more easily be controlled.
2. As far as practicable keep your paddocks clear of debris likely to cause sparking
3. Keeping exhausts and hot parts clear of grass, seeds and oil accumulations
4. Having a means of extinguishment IMMEDIATELY available

Water is the only really effective means of extinguishing grass/bush fires. Having a packspray or water extinguisher on the machine with you can mean you should be able to extinguish any fire caused by the machine within seconds.

A commercially available 9 litre stored pressure water extinguisher will deliver a jet of water to 6 to 8 metres for about 45 seconds, can be easily refilled by yourself if you have an air compressor, and costs only about \$100.

This might be more effective than a fire unit parked at the opposite end of the paddock, both are good precautions and having one should not preclude having the other.

Rgds

John Mangini

Captain West Gidgegannup Volunteer Bushfire Brigade