

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180

September 12, 2012

IOWA BULLETIN NO. IA190-12-12

SUBJECT: ECS – DROUGHT-INDUCED HARVEST FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE. To provide direction in the event clients request emergency tillage for the purpose of harvest-time fire risk management.

EXPIRATION DATE. September 30, 2013

The Iowa Fire Marshall recently issued press statements regarding steps farmers might take to manage increased risks of harvest-time fires due to drought-damaged crops, high temperatures and low humidity levels. One of the steps mentioned was tillage of field edges to act as fire breaks.

If a client requests emergency tillage for fire risk management, the following steps will be taken.

1. Check the client's case file to determine whether or not the requested tillage is compatible with any Highly Erodible Land (HEL) Compliance requirements for the affected field(s). Also check for compatibility with any Conservation Security Program (CSP) or Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) contracts.
2. Discuss options for reducing field fire risks, including:
 - a. Keeping the areas around combine engines and exhaust systems clean,
 - b. Avoiding parking vehicles with catalytic converters in places where dry crop residues could come into contact with hot exhaust systems,
 - c. Delaying harvest activities during times when humidity levels are at or below 20% and wind speeds are sustained at 15 miles per hour (mph) or more or when winds are gusting at 20 mph or more.
3. If the requested tillage is NOT compatible with HEL, CSP or CStP requirements and the client wishes to proceed, a written waiver may be provided on the condition that the tilled areas are seeded to a cover crop immediately after the tillage takes place.

Questions on this matter may be directed to Marty Adkins, State Resource Conservationist, at (515) 284-4370, or Larry Beeler, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at (515) 284-4353.

/s/Adam Stiegelmeier, Acting
Jon Hubbert
Acting State Conservationist
E

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer