



NEWS from STATE FIRE



NEW YORK STATE
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STATE FIRE SAFETY ALERT ISSUED TO MUNICIPAL HIGHWAY DEPARTMENTS

The New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) today issued a Fire Service Safety Alert Bulletin to municipalities throughout the State who operate commercial snow plow vehicles advising them of fire prevention measures they should incorporate as part of their preventive maintenance program to avoid a recently identified equipment problem that has resulted in more than a million dollars' worth of fire damage.

The OFPC Arson Bureau has investigated four incidents involving fires in large commercial vehicles outfitted as snow plow trucks, which resulted in damages to the vehicles and, in three cases, the municipal highway garage complex. The apparent cause of the fires is related to the electrical systems of the large commercial snow plow trucks.

The most recent fire occurred in the Town of Veteran, Chemung County, on December 2-3 and severely damaged the town's highway garage and all equipment within, including a snow plow dump truck and pay loader, and destroyed a snowplow sander truck. The damage is estimated to be \$1.25 million. State Fire Administrator Floyd A. Madison said the cause of the fire is accidental and attributed to an electrical arc from the battery cable shorting against the frame rail of the sander vehicle.

"These fire incidents represent significant dollar loss to vital equipment in addition to the catastrophic devastation to a municipality's infrastructure," Madison said. "Communities across the State need to be aware of this problem and take the proper preventive maintenance."

Richard Barlette, Chief of the OFPC Arson Bureau, said the equipment failures in the fires the bureau investigated were caused by electrical short circuiting as a result of worn electrical cable insulation. (See photo at right.) These failures appear to occur where large capacity electrical cables come in contact with the chassis frame or short to the ground. Additional electrical equipment problems have been discovered attributable to missing or improper fusing of installed equipment.



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OFPC is urging communities who operate large commercial snow plow vehicles to take the following prevention measures:

1. Inspect battery cables and vehicle electrical distribution wiring for signs of wear, chaffing or contact with the frame and secure as necessary to prevent abrasion as illustrated in the photo at right.
2. Inspect the Fuse protection of the electrical system to assure proper fusing of circuits and secondary equipment. Fuse protection should include fail safe protection from incidents of a main electrical cable short or failure. Consult the vehicle manufacturer as necessary for guidance.
3. Routinely maintain all electrical connections to assure they remain tight and free from corrosion.
4. Follow all manufacture recommendations for the proper installation and operation of the vehicle electrical system to include all aftermarket equipment requiring electrical connection to the vehicle systems.
5. Inspect fuel and hydraulic lines for signs of wear and repair and secure as necessary to prevent abrasion.
6. Protect your facility by ensuring the building complex is free of common fire hazards and that suitable fire prevention measures are in place and working, to include an effective early fire detection alarm system.



The Fire Service Safety Alert Bulletin is being sent to the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York State County Highway Department Superintendents Association and the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways.

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