



Ron Bowick's Ford New Holland Gemini 8160 tractor was a complete loss.

Electrical Short Sparks Tractor Fire

A Barrhead, Alta., family recently lost a tractor to a middle-of-the-night electrical fire, and says the incident was both "disheartening," and "pretty scary."

Ron Bowick says the Ford New Holland Gemini 8160 tractor was insured, luckily, and parked in the open yard, which allowed them

to put the fire out before it spread to anything else.

"Normally, we park it inside a shed or shop, so it could have been a lot worse. It's not often that, when you burn up a \$75,000 tractor and loader, you feel you were lucky," Bowick says.

Their fire began at around 3 a.m., when Bowick's Border Collies woke him up with their frantic barking. When he looked out the window, the tractor was already half-burnt and the fire had spread to some nearby chaff and hay on the ground.

Bowick rushed out and was able to eventually put out all of the fire, but the tractor was a complete loss.

He says it was a low-hour unit that "ran like new and looked like new." It was shedded 90 per cent of its life and was probably seven or eight years from needing tires, he says.

"That tractor was clean and shiny. If it got any hay, dirt or oil on it, it got washed, and it was serviced regularly and on time," Bowick points out. "When the adjuster arrived, he immediately asked a couple of questions: were there any major problems with the tractor when you parked it? And what area of the tractor was burned when you first went out? Then he went straight to the spot and found where it had shorted out. He said there had been electrical arcing in the wiring harness where it went up through the front of the cab."

Bowick says it struck him as odd that an insurance adjuster would go right to the problem that quickly. "He wouldn't even answer me when I asked if he had heard of this happening before," he adds.

The adjuster recommended Bowicks install a battery isolator in the electrical system of the replacement tractor as a preventative measure.

"After this fire, my recommendation is that any tractor with all of this modern electrical equipment would be safer if it had a battery isolator. My local parts store calls it a "master disconnect switch," and sells it for \$38.99. The owner says he can name a dozen electrical fires in the area on various types of machines that burned down equipment and shops," Bowick points out.

A battery isolator is a switch you install between the battery post and your positive cable. When in the off position, it allows you to stop the electricity flow from the battery to the rest of the tractor. It's the same result as taking one battery cable right off the battery, but a lot easier. You do have to manually flick the switch, however, after shutting down the unit for the night. You can install it yourself, and it's relatively inexpensive.

"We're buying another tractor the same as what we had. We're not scared off of the Gemini because we like the tractor," says Bowick.

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Tractor pto drives a 90 degree gearbox that's attached to wheel.

3-Pt. Trencher Cuts Narrow Drainage Ditch

"Our new 3-pt. mounted rotary power trencher works great for trenching low areas and ditch bottoms. It makes a narrow 3-in. wide trench so you can work right through growing crops with little damage," says Steve Raguse, Wheaton, Minn.

Raguse is also the inventor of rubber trench-digging wheels for ATV's (Vol. 26, No. 4) that bolt on in place of the original wheels. They measure 1 in. wide at the outer edge and flare out to 3 in. wide at the center. Self-cleaning lugs, spaced 4 in. apart, weld onto the face of the wheels at an angle for traction. The wheels make a 4 to 12-in. deep trench in muddy ground.

The wheel on the power trencher is 3 in. wide at the outer edge and has 1-in. angled lugs. The tractor pto drives a 90 degree gearbox that's attached to the wheel. The unit can be powered by any tractor with 30 hp or more.

"It makes just a 3-in. wide trench which you can drive over without damaging your equipment. It'll even cut through tall grass," says Raguse. "It works best to dig the trench 4 to 5 in. deep. With land rents so high today, it's worth a lot of money if you can keep ditch bottoms and low areas drained so you can get a crop off them. The lugs are angled so they stay clean while digging."

"It works fast. The wheel is parallel with the tractor and rotates in the same direction you're driving, so you can dig whether you're going in forward or reverse. You don't have to waste time backing into an area."

The trencher works with Cat. II or III 3-pt. hitches, and with either 540 or 1,000 rpm pto's. It sells for \$2,995.

Raguse also offers new 3-in. wide wheels that are designed for heavy truck-type ATV's. The wheels are built to handle power-spinning by an ATV's rear wheels while trenching and work best in sandy soils. They fit all



Power trencher wheel is 3 in. wide at the outer edge and has 1-in. angled lugs.



Trencher works great in low areas and ditch bottoms. "It makes a 3-in. wide trench so you can work right through growing crops with little damage," says Raguse.

ATV's. The wheels sell for \$1,295 per set of four.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Steve Raguse, 6978 County Road 16, Wheaton, Minn. 56296 (ph 320 563-8389 or 320 815-0865; raguse@traversenet.com; www.trenchwheel.com).



Raguse also offers new 3-in. wide wheels that are designed for heavy truck-type ATV's. Wheels are built to handle power spinning by an ATV's rear wheels while trenching.

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