

Chimney Stopped His Combine Fires

"In hot and dry sunflower harvesting conditions I used to have several fires a year," says Chester Schantz, who farms near Hebron, N. Dak. "It got to be so frustrating I was blowing off the machine every few rounds and still getting sparks that were causing small fires. I was ready to give up on growing sunflowers."

One night, however, Schantz woke up with a "vision" to fix the problem. The next day he built an 8-ft. "chimney-like extension" out of plywood that attaches to the combine's air intake screen. The opening at the top allows dust-free air to enter the engine.

"This really isn't anything more than a wood box around the air intake," Schantz says. "It eliminates a large amount of sunflower dust and tailings being pulled in around the engine, which was causing the fires."

Schantz says he spent about \$60 in materials and a few hours labor to build his chimney stack. It's made of 5/8-in. thick plywood, is about 2 1/2 ft. sq., and stands about 8 ft. tall. The top is 16 ft. off the ground, which allows his machine to just fit under electrical wires and inside his machine shed. After success with the chimney on his Case IH combine, Schantz built a shorter 32-in. chimney for his Deere combine. It works just as well.

One of Schantz's neighbors has built a similar extension for a newer Case IH combine and says it also works great. "Sometimes when the dust is real thick all we can see is the chimney poking through the top of the cloud," Schantz says. "That means the combine is getting clean air, and the amount of dust pulling by the engine is greatly reduced."

Schantz's wife Bonnie says the black box has attracted a lot of media attention, including a story in The Sunflower Magazine, calls from radio and TV stations, and a local ag magazine. "This has grown from just a simple idea to a frenzy," Bonnie says with a laugh. "We were joking one night that since the chimney really looks like an outhouse that we should paint a door and a half moon on the back and that would really cause a stir."

Bonnie says, "We've had about 10 calls from people wanting to know how to build the chimney, how to make one round, can we build one for them, and why is it painted black? Chester was just shaking his head when the fellow asked about the black paint, but he had a quick response: because that's the only color I had in the shop." The Schantz's say they might draw up plans for the box and provide instructions on how to

mount it on Case and Deere combines.

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Reader Inquiry. 73