

PF Olsen Toolbox Safety Alert 98

Date: December 2025	Focus Group: All Staff and Contractors
Topic: Fire – Readiness and Prevention	Issued by: Nic Steens

Background: An excavator was working in the cutover when a fire started inside the battery box. The operator noticed a smoky smell through the air-conditioning system and radioed the crew. At the same time, the hauler operator saw smoke from the side of the machine, which quickly developed into flames. The operator responded rapidly, exiting the cab and using the small extinguisher. When the fire persisted, he used the larger externally mounted extinguisher and successfully extinguished it.

Injury and Damage Details: No injury. The fire damaged the batteries and a small amount of wiring. Repairs were completed the same day and the battery replaced.

Risk Awareness: Storing tools, grease guns, or loose metal objects in battery compartments greatly increases the risk of electrical arcing and fire. Battery boxes are for electrical components only. Even brief contact between metal fittings and terminals can create an arc and instant ignition. Fires can escalate rapidly on machinery operating in dry or debris-laden environments.

Fire Readiness and Prevention – Safe Behaviours and Basics:

- Never store loose tools, hoses, grease guns etc., inside battery compartments.
- Check battery boxes regularly for damaged wiring, or exposed terminals.
- Ensure required fire extinguishers are charged, accessible, and correctly rated – use the *largest effective extinguisher first* to attack the fire early.
- Always complete daily pre-starts incl. debris clearance and escape hatch checks.

For Site Manager:

Print and complete the following:

1. Discuss with employees/operators:
2. Place on-site notice board or in file:

Site Manager: _____ **Date:** / /
(initials)

