

FIRE SEASON READINESS CHECKLIST

For your fire fighting unit, your water, your machinery and your people



Your fire fighting unit works all year — wetting down, washdowns, filling and carting. Then one afternoon the wind swings and it has to start first pull.

Work through this before the season starts, not during it.

Most of what stops a unit working is found in ten minutes with a spanner and a full tank.

This checklist also covers the wider picture. In 2026 the Department of Fire and Emergency Services ran Harvest Fire Conversations across five WA grain-growing regions. Growers, brigades, local government and industry all landed on the same message: harvest fires are reduced or contained earlier when prevention, machinery checks, communication and training are sorted before harvest starts. Those themes are reflected here.

01

Start it up, then keep going

An engine that starts is not a unit that works. Run it for a few minutes and put water through the line before you tick anything off.

- ☐ Engine starts and holds a steady idle
- ☐ Pump draws and delivers water at pressure
- ☐ Water reaches the end of the hose with the flow you expect
- ☐ No unusual noise, vibration or smell under load

If the pump struggles to draw, check the suction line before you blame the pump. Air leaks on the suction side are the most common cause of a unit that will not prime.

02

Pump and Suction

- ☐ Suction hose free of cracks, splits or perished sections
- ☐ Suction connections airtight — a small leak stops it priming
- ☐ Foot valve clean and seating properly
- ☐ Strainer clear of leaves, sticks and debris
- ☐ Pump housing free of corrosion, overheating marks or vibration damage
- ☐ Impeller free of obstruction

Pumping water carrying sand, silt or grit wears a pump out. If yours has been used on dirty water, flush it with clean water after every use. Never pump chemicals, fuels, salt water or other corrosive liquids — it damages pump components and damage caused by misuse is not covered by warranty.

03**Engine**

- ☐ Engine oil at the correct level and clean
- ☐ Fuel fresh — replace petrol that has sat more than a couple of months, or use a stabiliser
- ☐ Diesel replaced roughly every six months and stored cool, free of air and water
- ☐ Fuel lines free of cracks, perishing or weeping
- ☐ No water in the carburettor bowl
- ☐ Fuel filter clean
- ☐ Air cleaner element clean and correctly seated
- ☐ Cooling fins and air intake clear of chaff, dust and debris
- ☐ Exhaust routed clear of any enclosure
- ☐ Recoil starter pulls smoothly and retracts fully
- ☐ Spark plug in serviceable condition

Old fuel is the most common reason a unit will not start after a long spell. Petrol left standing goes off, gums the carburettor and blocks jets. Drain it.

Chaff and dust packed into cooling fins is the second. An engine that cannot shed heat will run hot and stop, usually at the worst moment.

04**Water Delivery**

- ☐ Hose fully run out and checked along its whole length
- ☐ No cracks, abrasions, burns or perished sections
- ☐ Hose interior clear of debris
- ☐ Hose reel turns freely and the lock engages
- ☐ Hose rewinds evenly without binding
- ☐ All fittings and camlocks tight, seals intact
- ☐ Nozzle operates through its full range and shuts off cleanly
- ☐ Nozzle free of blockages, cracks or seized threads
- ☐ No leaks anywhere along the line under pressure

Roll the hose out fully. Damage hides in the section that stays on the reel, where nobody looks. Rubber hose stored in the sun or against hot metal degrades faster than you would expect.

05**Tank and Frame**

- ☐ Tank free of cracks, deformation or leaks
- ☐ Lid seals properly and is secure
- ☐ Sump drain clear and closing fully
- ☐ Water inside clean and free of algae
- ☐ Frame free of rust or damage
- ☐ Handles, lifting points and mounting fasteners tight
- ☐ Unit properly secured to the tray, tie-downs in good condition

An unsecured tank is dangerous. Water moves, and a tank that shifts on a tray under brakes or on a slope will take the vehicle with it. A baffled tank keeps the load stable.

06

Service History and Spares

- ☐ You know when the unit was last serviced
- ☐ Service is up to date against the manufacturer's schedule
- ☐ Spares on hand: fuel filter, air cleaner element, spark plug, spare fittings

If you cannot remember when the pump was last looked at, that is your answer.

07

Your Water Supply

A fire fighting unit is only as good as what fills it.

- ☐ Water storage full and accessible
- ☐ Fill point reachable by the unit, in the dark, in a hurry
- ☐ Supply independent of mains power
- ☐ You know how long it takes to refill
- ☐ Tanks free of cracks and leaks, water free of algae

Power failure is common during a fire. If your only refill option depends on an electric pump on mains supply, you have a single point of failure. DFES publishes guidance on recommended independent water supply for properties in fire-prone areas — check the current figure at dfes.wa.gov.au.

08

Around the Harvest

Machinery is the biggest single source of harvest fires. The Harvest Fire Conversations identified bearings, belts, engine bays, fronts and debris build-up as the recurring causes.

- ☐ Machinery blown down daily, more often in dusty conditions
- ☐ Bearings, belts and guards checked through the day, not just at start-up
- ☐ Engine bays and exhausts clear of chaff and trash build-up
- ☐ Thermal camera or heat gun used to find hot components, where available
- ☐ Rocks, wire and debris managed in the paddock
- ☐ Static mitigation considered where static is a known issue
- ☐ Extinguisher on every machine, in date and accessible
- ☐ Firefighting water kept close to the operation — unit, chaser bin capacity or mobile water
- ☐ Weather, wind and lightning information checked before and during the day
- ☐ Agreed triggers for when to pause, increase readiness or monitor after storms

09

Your People

Equipment is half of it. The other half is whether the people on the property can use it. DFES has made training for seasonal workers, family members and employees a priority off the back of the 2026 conversations.

- ☐ Everyone who might need to start the unit knows how
- ☐ Everyone knows where it is kept and where the keys are
- ☐ Seasonal workers and contractors know what to do if a fire starts
- ☐ Everyone knows who to call, and when to disengage for their own safety
- ☐ Vehicle the unit mounts to is fuelled and available
- ☐ Access routes to water are clear
- ☐ The plan has been talked through out loud with everyone this season

It is a different thing to have a plan and to have rehearsed one. Walk it through before you need it.

10

Communications

- ☐ UHF or radio working and everyone knows the channel
- ☐ A backup arrangement if mobile coverage drops out
- ☐ Group chat or radio arrangement in place with neighbours
- ☐ Everyone knows how to report a fire and who to report it to



FOUND SOMETHING?

That is what the list is for.
Better to find it in September than in January.

If you need parts, advice on servicing, or you are looking at replacing a unit that has done its time, our team can help.

P 1800 646 277
coerco.com.au