



Spontaneous Combustion of Hay

**If you suspect that the hay is heating,
and fire is imminent,
call 911.**

Hay is subject to spontaneous combustion if it is:

- **Improperly cured:**
 - moisture above 25%
- **Insufficiently cooled:**
 - high moisture
 - too tightly packed
 - inadequate ventilation

Occurs in both conventional and big round bales - usually 2 to 6 weeks after storage

In normal curing, temperatures may go up to 120°F.

Signs of heating in a mow:

- irritating tobacco-like odor
- settling of mow

NOTE:

- **Salting of the mow is not effective in preventing spontaneous combustion.**
- **If hay moisture is above 30%, chemical preservatives are also not effective.**

The best way to determine the heating characteristics of a mow is to check the temperature. A probe can easily be constructed. By periodically checking the temperature of the hay at various places, the stage of heating can be noted. The following [temperature chart](#) provides guidelines.

You may wish to check with your local supply store to purchase a thermometer.

To have your hay mow tested,
call the Cumberland County Control Center,
243-4121, 238-9676, or 532-8878.
They have a hay mow tester that you can use.

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