

# 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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