



## CHAINSAW EXHAUST STARTS FIRE IN CUTOVER



### What Happened

A manual felling operation was underway early on Monday morning, the faller had just finished dropping a tree, as he stood up he noticed a plume of smoke rising from over the small ridge where he had just been falling. He quickly investigated and found a fire had started in the pine needles next to his stump. While calling it in to his crew mates on his radio he deployed his belt extinguisher on the flames, others from the crew quickly arrived on the scene and used two large extinguishers to successfully extinguish the fire before it spread.

### Cause

- The fire was started when the heat of the exhaust from the chainsaw came into close contact with the ground during the fallers back cut, the ground was covered in very dry fine fuel material, e.g. pine needles and twigs, that heated up and eventually sparked.

### Other factors

- The chainsaw was a fairly new Stihl MS 661 MAGNUM (pictured top right). The original commonly used saw of the same size, the Stihl MS 660 (pictured below right) has a front AND side exhaust to distribute the fumes while the newer model only has the side exhaust. This means that while the 661 is being used on its side, e.g. back cut, all of the fumes and heat are being directed straight towards the ground.



### Conclusion

The fire may have started regardless of the model chainsaw being used due to the very dry ground conditions, however those using the newer model Stihl 661 MAGNUM need to be aware of the potential risk this design difference can create.

**Thank you to the faller and the crew who were vigilant and prepared and averted a potential disaster.**

**All crews must have their fire emergency equipment and plans on site and ready to go.**