

# Toolbox Safety Topic

## Groundskeeping Safety

### I. INTRODUCE THE TOPIC

It's that time of year again! Mowing, weed-eating, and trimming can create various safety hazards that employees need to be reminded of, even though these are typical chores performed around the home every week. Because these tasks are performed on-the-job, any associated hazards must be addressed in the same manner as any other work-related hazard.

### II. SPARK THEIR ATTENTION

- discuss a recent related accident
- relate a personal experience or example
- discuss a common myth or misconception

### III. ASK A RELATED QUESTION

Are mowing, weed-eating, and trimming tasks safer when performed at home? (They can be dangerous no matter where you perform them!) The information we're going to cover today is relative to groundskeeping tasks performed while at work as well as when you are at home. Be safe no matter where you are!

### IV. POINT OUT DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

Discuss what can be done to correct the hazard(s) and assign responsibility at this time so that hazards can be corrected (or improved) before the next meeting.

### V. EXPLAIN POLICIES AND/OR PROCEDURES

1. Dress the part for groundskeeping activities.
  - Protect your skin from overexposure to the sun, insect bites, stings, and poisonous plants by wearing long-sleeve shirts and long pants.
  - Do not wear jewelry which can get caught in moving parts.
  - Wear a hat with a visor (brim) to protect against the sun's heat and glare.
  - Apply sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher to exposed skin.
2. Wear your personal protective equipment.
  - Wear a hard hat when working around low tree branches or falling objects.
  - Always wear safety glasses to protect your eyes from debris propelled by power equipment. (Prescription glasses or contact lenses are not adequate protection for your eyes.) Choose lenses that block damaging ultraviolet rays.
  - Wear particulate masks to prevent you from inhaling dust and pollen. Wear half-mask respirators fitted with filters to provide protection from toxic fumes and vapors (ex. pesticides). Contact EHSS at 231-2509 for more information and fit testing.
  - When noise levels are high or you're exposed to lower noise levels for long periods of time, wear earplugs, earmuffs, or both. Contact EHSS at 231-3080 for more information and monitoring.
  - Footwear to protect you from blades and heavy objects is high-top, lace-up boots with traction soles and steel-reinforced toes.
  - Wear the right glove for the hazard you're facing (cuts, abrasions, chemicals, extreme temperatures, etc.). When working on machinery and powered equipment, always remove your gloves to avoid entanglement and being pulled into the machinery.

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3. Take care of yourself.
    - Get a good night's sleep and don't work with powered machinery if you're on medication which can make you dizzy or drowsy.
    - Take regular breaks and remember to drink 6-8 ounces of fluids a day (water or Gatorade are some of the best options).
  4. Know and take care of your equipment.
    - Read the operator's manual before using equipment. Be familiar with the equipment's safety features, controls, and hazards.
    - Follow all warning signs and labels on the equipment.
    - Inspect the equipment before each use at the beginning of the shift. Look for defective or missing parts, guards, and safety devices. Check fuel, oil, and water levels regularly. Never use equipment that is defective and needs repair.
    - Never fuel indoors or while equipment is in operation or hot.
    - Use only flash-proof safety cans and never smoke while working around gasoline. Clean up fuel spills immediately.
    - Always wear your seat belt while operating tractors with rollover protection. It will help keep you in the "safety zone" of the vehicle.
    - Before getting off tractors with attachments, lower the attachment to the ground, lock the parking brake, and shut off the engine.
    - On riding equipment, mow up and down, not across a slope. For push mowers, always mow side-to-side.
    - Twenty-five percent of tractor deaths occur on public roads, so drive slowly, avoid sharp turns, edges, and depressions in roads, display moving vehicle warning signs, flags, and lights to alert traffic. Brightly colored vests will make you more visible to traffic as well. You want to be seen in these situations!
    - String-line and blade trimmers should have guards in place and metal blades should be securely fastened.
    - Stop hazardous work when pedestrians or by-standers are present.
  5. Be prepared for emergencies.
    - Keep a stocked first-aid kit handy for cuts, scrapes, and burns.
    - Keep a bee-sting kit and snake-bite kit handy. Employees who may have an allergic reaction to stings should let others know about their situation and how to administer medication in case of emergency.
    - Make sure portable fire extinguishers are available and ready to use.
    - Check all container labels for hazardous products. Follow safe use recommendations, proper application, storage, handling, and disposal methods, and review emergency procedures for exposure prior to use.
    - Keep emergency phone numbers handy.
  6. Inspect the work area first.
    - Look for obvious hazards such as rocks, stakes, and culverts and mark them with easy-to-spot stakes or plastic tape.
- VI. Suppose there is an accident involving this hazard, what would you do? *(Give employees an opportunity to respond, then discuss the procedure below.)*

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Conducted By: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attendees**

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