Hazardous Plants – Landscaping Fatality File

Fatal Incident Due to Hazardous Plant Exposure in Landscaping

On June 10, 2023, a fatal incident involving exposure to hazardous plants occurred during a landscaping project in Portland, Oregon, resulting in the death of a 45-year-old landscaper, Maria Lopez. Lopez was working in a residential garden when she came into contact with giant hogweed, a highly toxic plant known for its harmful sap.

The investigation revealed that Lopez was unaware of the plant’s presence and was not wearing appropriate protective clothing. The sap from the giant hogweed caused severe skin burns and blisters, and later complications led to her hospitalization. Despite receiving intensive medical care, Lopez succumbed to her injuries due to a severe allergic reaction and secondary infections.

This incident highlighted the lack of awareness and training regarding hazardous plants in the landscaping industry. The landscaping company has since implemented mandatory training programs focused on identifying and safely handling toxic plants. Additionally, they have enforced the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all outdoor workers to prevent similar incidents in the future.