Landscaping Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Job tasks change seasonally for a landscaper, but power and hand tools and exposure to bugs and the elements last all year long. Know safe work practices to avoid cuts, punctures, and amputations. Protect yourself from critters, sun, heat, and cold that you encounter outdoors.

What’s the Danger

HARMS/HAZARDS OF LANDSCAPING WORK

Motor Vehicles and Equipment

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of fatal accidents among landscapers. This includes traffic accidents (frequent travel from job to job means more time on the road) and struck-by incidents. Planning before the job begins and controlling traffic during the job, such as through the use of a flagger, can increase safety.

In addition to motor vehicles, landscapers have to avoid cuts, amputations, buried electrical lines and sprains and strains while working with a variety of powered equipment and other sharp tools. The following recommendations can help prevent these types of injuries:

- **Stay aware at all times.** Workers must focus on both the job and what’s going on around them. Getting distracted around dangerous equipment or getting tunnel vision on the task at hand can be equally dangerous.
- **Keep tools sharp.** Dull blades require more force to get the job done, increasing risk for repetitive stress injuries, cuts and amputations.
- **Know your equipment.** Blowers, mowers and other power tools can cause severe injuries if they are used incorrectly.

Train employees in the safe use of any equipment they will be expected to use.
- **Power ALL the way down.** Ensure all blades have stopped moving completely and tools are de-energized before attempting maintenance on equipment.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

HEALTH HAZARDS

Pesticides. Pesticides can enter the body by mouth, through the skin and eyes or as vapors inhaled into the lungs. The long pants, sturdy shoes, gloves and eye protection that many landscapers wear every day can help protect from exposure to chemicals found in lawn care products, solvents, fill dirt and soil.

Pesticides can cause a wide variety of health effects depending on the product, individual and level of exposure. Chronic, low-level exposure or a single acute exposure can cause workers to have allergic reactions and develop sensitivity to pesticides or occupational asthma.

Exposure to Het, Sun and Infectious Diseases. Long hours in the sun can cause heat stress and raise the risk for skin cancer.

Spending time around plants, tall grasses and standing water also puts landscapers at increased risk for contact with biting and stinging insects and other animals.

GENERAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR WORKERS WHEN LANDSCAPING

- If you are the worker, report unsafe working conditions or equipment to your supervisor.
- Rest periodically during strenuous jobs such as digging or sawing: work-rest schedules vary according to temperature conditions, how strenuous the work is, and how acclimatized (“used to”) the worker is to the workload.
- Make sure emergency telephone numbers are clearly posted or readily available.
- Know the location of the first aid kit and how to use the

contents.

- Identify and destroy harmful or noxious plants such as poison ivy.
- Protect against insects with insect repellents or protective clothing when needed.
- Use caution in areas where you may encounter wild animals or unfriendly domestic ones.
- Carry a ‘bee sting’ kit if there is a chance of a severe allergic reaction to an insect sting. Alert your supervisor and the employer to make sure co-workers are trained to assist.
- Do not touch stray or dead animals or birds. Contact an animal control or wildlife agency for removal. In some cases, your local public health authority may need to be contacted.
- Wear respiratory protection if you must clean up waste, leaves or dust that may contain mouse or bird droppings. Mice can carry the hantavirus which can become airborne with dust and may be inhaled by workers. Bird droppings can carry a microorganism that may cause psittacosis – a flu-like illness.
- All outdoor workers should be aware of leave in.
- Outdoor workers should also be aware of West Nile virus. West Nile virus is spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito.
- Be aware of expected weather conditions for the day, and plan accordingly. Have plans about where to go if severe weather hits. Know where to seek shelter in a thunderstorm (such as fully enclosed metal vehicles, with windows up or a building (not sheds).
- Learn proper hand washing techniques. Wash your hands thoroughly after working or using pesticides, before eating, using the washroom, or changing tasks (using different tools and/or different locations).
- Take regular rest breaks. Frequent short pauses are better than longer breaks further apart. In warm weather, take breaks in areas that are cooled, such as inside a vehicle (with the air conditioning running), or in shade where

possible. Similarly, in cold weather, take breaks in areas that are warm.

- When working in the heat and sun, consider working where there is shade, or create shade by setting up a shade tent.

FINAL WORD

Landscaping work may not seem to be as dangerous as construction or oilfield work. But the consequences of faulty or sloppy landscaping work Manship can be as devasting or deadly. Constant vigilance and attention is required by landscapers in all aspects of this important work.