Manual And Powered Hand Tools – Landscaping Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

There is a two-step test for workers to stay safe when they use manual and powered hand tools: (i) Select the right tool for the task; and (ii) be trained properly in the use of the tool.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Manual tools such as knives, loppers, or pruning shears and electric tools such as hedge trimmers are often sources of cuts and overuse injuries.

Common hazards include the following:

- Cuts from blades
- Catching fingers, clothing, or jewellery in pinch points
- Overexertion injuries from repetitive use

Incident example

- A young worker severed his finger at the first joint when he attempted to prune a hedge with electric shears while holding a branch of the hedge.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Initial Manual and Powered Hand Tool Checklist

- Choose tools that fit your hands and work style, and that work comfortably for you.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as necessary, including eye

On the Job

Knives, pruners, and powered hand tools are primary tools that landscape workers use in their work. Their collective safety is dependent on the correct usage of these tools.

Knives

- Use the right knife for the job and make sure it is sharp.
- Whenever possible, use a knife with a locking blade, not a penknife that can close on your finger.
- Always cut away from yourself.
- Store knives separately from other tools.
- Cut on a flat surface or cutting board.
- Never use a knife for anything other than cutting.
- Hold the knife in your stronger hand.
- To clean a knife, direct the edge away from you and wipe with the cloth on the dull edge of the blade.
- Protect your hands by wearing well-fitting gloves with a good grip.

Pruners

- Lock pruners when not in use.
- Wear well-fitting gloves with a good grip.
- Watch for potential pinch points.
- Don’t twist pruners while cutting.
- Use the right tool for the job. Don’t try to use pruners to cut branches that are too large.
- If you are doing a repetitive task, stop to rest your hands occasionally or vary the job with something else.
- Keep pruners clean.
- Carry pruners in a holster, not in your pocket.

Powered hand tools

- Use both hands to hold and guide the tool.
- Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI).
- Use the right rating of cord for the distance (longer distances require a higher rating).
- Keep the cord behind you to avoid snipping it or tripping on it. Consider putting the cord through your belt.

Responsibilities of Employers

- Maintain and repair hand tools.
- Train workers in the safe use of hand tools before they start work.
- Demonstrate how to hold, use, and store hand tools.
- Demonstrate how the safety features work (for example, guards, shields, and automatic releases), and instruct workers not to remove any of these features.
- Demonstrate how to lock out electric equipment before clearing any jams or performing repairs or maintenance.
- Remind workers about the PPE they are required to wear.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

FINAL WORD

Landscape workers must be able to select the correct tool for the job, have the ability to operate it safely and be confident enough to accept a measure of supervision.