Weed Wacker Safety Meeting Kit

HAZARDS

A weed Wacker is designed to rotate a blade or string at high speeds which not only cuts the desired brush or grass, but also often throws stones and other objects at high rates of speed. These thrown objects can cause property damage incidents or injuries to bystanders. Workers need to evaluate the work area and task and take into account the possibility of these types of incidents occurring due to thrown objects.

OTHER HAZARDS

Eye injuries are the most common injury for workers using trimmers. Lacerations to the user and others may occur when sharp objects are sent flying during use. Heat related illnesses are common during prolonged trimmer use; take frequent breaks and drink water to stay hydrated. Back strains occur during prolong use and incorrect bending. Wrist strains are common during prolonged use, adjust the harness system and hand grips for a comfortable hand position.

String trimmers are capable of causing serious injury. Workers need to avoid the following when using this equipment.

- Do not leave running tool unattended.
- Do not wear short pants or short sleeves.
- Do not use rigid blades in stony areas.
- Do not overreach. Keep proper footing and balance at all times.
- Do not repair damaged attachments.

WEED WACKER (A.K.A. STRING TRIMMER

- A weed Wacker, technically labeled as a string trimmer, is a handheld lawn care device. This type of machine is used to

trim weeds and areas of the yard that can’t be reached with a lawnmower. Weed Wackers use a rotating string to cut grass instead of blades.

- They usually have a two-stroke gas-powered engine. Adding gas into a weed eater isn’t the same as filling up your car. Two-stroke engines require you to premix gasoline and motor oil in the proper ratio, rather than adding gas and oil separately, as you do in a vehicle.
- Some weed Wackers can have a four-stroke engine, which does not require the oil and gas to be mixed together.
- Mixing the oil and gas improperly is the most common cause of smoking weed Wackers, and it’s usually a simple fix. But continuing to run the machine with the improper mixture can cause damage to your engine.

SAFETY TIPS FOR WORKERS USING WEED TRIMMERS

Consider the following safety tips for using weed trimmers.

1. Prepare the site – walk the area to be trimmed prior to starting. Remove debris, sticks, stones, and other obstacles or potential hazards. Make sure there are no people or pets in the area and stay alert to anyone or anything entering your workspace while trimming. Prepare the weed trimmer by checking the safety guards and shields, making sure they are in place. Verify there is enough nylon line in the spool. Fill the fuel tank and always allow the engine to cool down before refueling.
2. When trimming, keep in mind that lawn trimmers can throw objects at high speeds, so avoid working near people, vehicles, and delicate building structures. Never attempt to adjust or repair a weed trimmer while the engine is running. Keep the line short so it does not extend past the guard on the head of the weed trimmer. Keep one hand on the handle and one hand on the shaft of the trimmer to provide greater control. If provided, use a shoulder strap for support to help with weight and vibration of the weed trimmer. When

trimming, keep the throttle at full speed, but be able to maintain control of the trimmer. Swing the trimmer in a slow smooth arcing motion. Move the trimmer forward and step forward to cover more ground. Don’t over extend the trimmer with just your arms or bending forward, as this could cause excess fatigue.

3. Watch for hidden obstacles like wires, fence posts, rocks, or bricks that could cause the trimmer to bounce backwards or entangle the line and jam the trimmer. Wear work boots, hearing protection, eye and face protection, long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
4. If you are working near a street or roadway, wear a reflective vest. Be aware of nearby traffic, parked vehicles and position yourself so you won’t accidentally throw objects into traffic or vehicles. Don’t listen to music with headphones, as it can be a distraction and add to noise exposure. Use sun block and wear a hat to protect from sun exposure. Use an insect repellant with at least 10% DEET to protect from mosquito and tick bites. Stay hydrated, drinking about 8 ounces of water every 20 minutes.
5. Be able to identify and avoid poisonous plants like poison ivy, poison sumac, and nettles. Watch out for venomous spiders, caterpillars, and snakes. Keep a first-aid kit handy and include EpiPens and a snakebite kit in the kit.
6. The key to safe operation of weed trimmers varies; select the proper type of weed trimmer for the job. Make sure workers are properly trained to use the equipment. Survey the work area and identify or remove obstacles and hazards. Don’t work around people or pets. Inspect and maintain your equipment frequently.

WEED WACKER TAKEAWAYS

- Eliminate weed Wacker activities where possible. Landscaping or using a weed killer can reduce the need to use a weed Wacker.
- Ensure all safety devices on the weed Wacker are in place and functioning correctly. Most weed Wackers have some type

of guard to deflect objects from being thrown back towards the operator. Also make sure any kill switches or safety switches work correctly.

- Read the owner’s manual to understand the specifics of the machine you are using.
- Remove any objects or people that could be struck by flying debris during weed clearing activities before beginning work. Stop when a car or person comes too close to your work area.
- Wear the proper PPE while using a weed Wacker. Proper PPE includes: safety glasses, a face shield, long sleeve shirt, anti-vibration gloves, long pants, long socks, and safety toe boots that go around the ankle.

FINAL WORD

Do not take lawn care activities lightly when it comes to safety. Injuries occur every single day while using this equipment. As mentioned above, most reported injuries occur to the eyes. How would an injury to the eyes affect you and your ability to work?