

Groundskeeping - Know the Hazards

June 2010



Groundskeeping can be a great job but the work can be hazardous. There's danger in the use of mowers and other landscaping equipment. Cutting surfaces, rotating parts, hot engine parts, as well as rocks and debris from

spinning blades have resulted in serious injuries to employees. To prevent injuries:

- Wear personal protective equipment at all times. Proper footwear and firm footing will help prevent foot injuries and amputations that occur when the operator's foot slides under a mower on a wet or slippery slope. To prevent eye injuries from flying debris, wear impact resistant eye wear with side shields and be aware about the direction of the discharge when you operate the equipment. To prevent injury to others, halt your work until the area is clear.
- Hot engines and engine parts should be allowed to cool down before refueling the equipment. Keep cigarettes and other sources of ignition away from mowers and gasoline containers. To avoid burns to the body, do not allow bare skin to touch the engine muffler or other hot metal part. It is always a good idea to disable a mower before servicing it. Unplugging the spark plug wire(s) will keep the engine from inadvertently starting up and should always be done before putting any part of your body near the blade.
- Keep electric tools in good repair. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) with electric trimmers, saws, and mowers. Power cords should be free of defects and kept away from moisture.
- When using ride-on mowers or tractors, do not carry passengers. Use only the load rating and attachments approved by the manufacturer. Rollover protection bars and screens designed by the manufacturer should be used as well as seatbelts if equipped on the machinery.
- Consider using ergonomically designed tools to help prevent cumulative type injuries. For instance, use a shoulder strap to take some of the weight off the gasoline powered weed trimmer that you use on a daily basis.
- Use a suitable sunscreen for your skin type, cover up with long sleeves and pants, and wear a hat with a brim large enough to shade your face and neck from the harsh heat effects of the sun. Stay hydrated by drinking water and liquids containing electrolytes but avoid caffeinated and sugary drinks.
- Wearing long sleeve shirts and pants will also help prevent contact with poison ivy and other similar plants that can cause mild to severe cases of skin irritations. If contact is made, immediate first aid treatment should be given which includes flushing the affected area with lots of cool water. Preventing a serious reaction is especially important for those who are highly sensitive to the irritating substance contained in these plants.
- Sometimes groundskeepers find potentially infectious objects such as discarded needles. A puncture wound from a contaminated needle or other sharp object could possibly infect a person with a bloodborne disease such as AIDS or Hepatitis B. Wearing leather gloves will help prevent accidental encounters. When picking up discarded needles use tongs. Place needles and syringes in a hard plastic or metal container with a screw-on cap or tightly secured lid. Reinforce the lid of the container with heavy-duty tape and label the container "Syringes - Not for Recycling."
- Watch overhead power lines. Keep a distance of more than 10 feet away from power lines. For tree trimming operations, if lines are within 10 feet, have the power shut off before you begin trimming.

The TMLIRP Media Library includes #796 - *Groundskeeping: Be a Pro*, #122 - *Proper Operation of Leaf Blowers*, and #37 - *Safety Basics on the Golf Course*. Refer to www.tmlirp.org or call 800-537-6655 and ask for the Loss Prevention Department.