



Lawn Maintenance Workplace Exposures

Lawn Maintenance operations have several potential workplace hazards that can cause serious injury. FFVA Mutual loss control consultants can assist in evaluating exposures and provide appropriate loss control recommendations to minimize accidents.

Lawn Maintenance Workplace Exposures

- Back injuries and strains
- Cuts and lacerations
- Exposure to chemicals, herbicides, and insecticides
- Exposure to noise
- Gas powered lawn equipment
- Power tools
- Slip, trips, and falls

Developing a Loss Control Program

To successfully implement a workplace safety program, management must be willing to reduce and eliminate workplace injuries. There must be a 100% commitment from management to establish an effective injury-free work environment.

Equipment Safety Tips for Riding Lawn Mowers

- Avoid driving in reverse, if possible
- Clean clippings and other debris from the mower after each use
- Clear the desired mowing area of debris, rocks or other obstacles before each use
- Disengage the mower and transmission before starting
- Engage the blades at the lowest engine setting first and then release the brake slowly
- Ensure the grass catcher, discharge guard, and other safety devices are in good working order
- Fill the gas tank in an open space to avoid vapor inhalation
- Inspect equipment before each use
- Mow in straight lines while but avoid objects such as trees and shrubs
- Never carry passengers on the mower
- Never put your hands or feet near the rotating blades under the machine
- Read the instruction manual and receive the proper training before operating the machinery
- Slow down significantly while turning
- Start the mower while in the driver's seat, not while standing next to the machine
- Turn off the mower and disengage the blades when you are finished
- Wear tight-fitting long pants, eye protection, ear protection, non-slip boots, and gloves to protect against flying debris
- When the engine is off, adjust the disc-cutting height

Equipment Safety Tips for Push Mowers

- Do not operate a push mower with your back bent (This can cause back pain and injuries.)
- Ensure that shields are in place before operating the machine
- Inspect warning lights and signs that could indicate damage to the equipment
- Learn how to stop the machine quickly and safely in an emergency
- Make sure the Power-Take-Off (PTO), mower input driveline, drive belts, and chains and gears are properly guarded
- Never leave a running mower unattended
- Place a Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem on the back of the machine if you are traveling on public roads
- Proceed with caution around corners
- Push the mower in a forward direction only
- Review the owner's manual before operating the machinery
- Set the mower on the highest cutting level when operating it on rough terrain
- Stop the mower if you hit an object inspect the blade and service the machine, if necessary

Equipment Safety Tips for Tractors with Rotary Mowers

- Wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as required
- When stopping to pick up debris, cut the throttle to idle so that the mower cannot roll away

Equipment Safety Tips for Hedge Trimmers

- Read the instruction manual and/or receive the proper training before operating the machinery
- Inspect the equipment before use. Note that the safety guards are in working order and are not damaged
- Check for loose screws or bolts. Replace any parts that are broken or damaged
- Sharpen the blades, if needed
- Clear the area of stones, debris, garbage, and fellow employees
- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, eye protection (goggles or safety glasses), ear protection (earplugs or earmuffs), non-slip gloves, and boots
- Pull back long hair and remove hanging jewelry that could be caught on the equipment
- Carry the tool to the desired location by the front handle with the cutting blades behind you
- Do not remove any of the safety equipment on the tool while it is in use
- Hold the tool with both hands grasping the handles tightly
- Position your body away from the engine fumes to avoid inhalation
- When using electric models, keep the cord away from the blades to avoid cutting it

Equipment Safety Tips for Leaf Blowers

- Plan work before operating a leaf blower
- Do not operate machinery near others as there is a throwing object hazard
- Run the machine in an upright position
- Wear a dust mask if dust and debris is a nuisance
- Wear eye protection to protect your vision against throwing object hazards and hearing protection to protect your hearing from loud noise
- Wear hearing protection while operating handheld and backpack blowers
- Be careful when operating machines on a slanted surface

Equipment Safety Tips for Equipment Transport

- Do not load and unload equipment by yourself
- Always work with another employee to assist you
- Secure machinery on trailers before proceeding
- Ensure the trailer is properly attached to tow vehicles, lights and turn signals are operational, safety chains in place, and tires are inflated and in good condition

Safety Tips for Maintenance Mechanics

- Do not use gasoline for degreasing or cleaning automobile engine parts
- Do not use hands or fists as hammers
- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing or jewelry in the maintenance shop
- Wash hands with soap and water after working in the maintenance shop
- Wear eye protection, closed toe shoes or other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when working in maintenance areas

Safety Tips for Maintenance Shop/Housekeeping

- Clean up broken glass using a dustpan and broom. Do not pick up broken glass with bare hands
- Clean and return tools to their storage places after each use
- Straighten or remove rugs/mats that do not lie flat
- Sweep up shavings from around equipment such as lathes and sanding equipment by using a broom and dustpan
- Use caution signs/cones to barricade slippery areas such as greasy or freshly mopped floors

Safety Tips for Hand Tools

- Do not perform "make-shift" repairs to any tool
- Do not use a tool if the handle has splinters, burrs, cracks, or splits, or if the head of the tool is loose
- Do not use impact tools such as hammers, chisels, punches, or steel stakes that have "mushroomed" heads
- If your safety glasses become fogged, stop work and clean the glasses until lenses are clear and defogged

Safety Tips for Shop Machines

- Do not remove, alter, or bypass any safety guards or devices when operating shop machinery
- Do not try to stop a work piece as it goes through any machine. If the machine becomes jammed, disconnect power source before clearing the jam
- Read and obey safety warnings posted on or near any drill press, lathe, or other shop machinery
- Replace the guards before starting machines and after making adjustments or repairs

Safety Tips for Bench Grinders

- Adjust the tongue guard so that it is no more than 1/8" from the grinding wheel and 1/4" from the brush
- Do not operate grinders unless all guards are in place
- Do not try to stop the wheel with your hand, even if wearing gloves
- Do not use grinding wheels that have chips, cracks or grooves
- Do not use the grinding wheel if it wobbles Tag it "Out of Service"
- Wear eye protection when operating a bench grinder

Safety Tips for Pneumatic Tools

- Disconnect the tool from the airline before making adjustments or repairs to the tool
- Do not point a compressed air hose at bystanders or use it to clean your clothing
- Do not use compressors if belt guards are missing. Replace belt guards before use
- Do not use tools if handles have burrs or cracks
- Place an "Out of Service" tag on damaged tools to prevent usage
- Turn the tool off and allow it to completely stop before leaving it unattended

Safety Tips for Working along Roadside

- Isolate work area with traffic cones when working along roadside or in medians, etc.
- Wear high visibility vests when working along roadside

Safety Tips for Electric Power Tools

- Do not carry plugged in equipment or tools with your finger on the power switch
- Do not carry tools or equipment by the power cord
- Do not connect multiple electrical tools into a single outlet
- Do not drive over, drag, step on or place objects on a cord
- Do not handle or operate electrical tools when your hands are wet or when standing on wet surface
- Do not operate power hand tools or portable appliances while holding a part of the metal casing or holding the extension cord in your hand. Hold all portable power tools by the plastic hand grip or other non-conductive areas designed for gripping purposes
- Do not operate spark inducing tools such as grinders, drills, or saws near flammable or combustible liquids or gases
- Do not run extension cords through doorways, holes in ceilings, walls, or floors
- Do not use an adapter such as a cheater plug that eliminates ground
- Do not use cords that have splices, exposed wires, or cracked or frayed ends
- Do not use extension cords or other grounded three pronged power cords that have the ground prong removed or broken off
- Turn off electrical tools and disconnect power source from the outlet before attempting repairs or service work tag the tool "Out of Service"
- Turn the tool off before plugging in or unplugging it

Safety Tips for Compressed Gas Cylinders (Storage & Handling)

- Do not handle oxygen cylinders if your gloves are greasy or oily
- Store all cylinders in an upright position and secure with a chain to a permanent structure to avoid tipping
- Place valve protection caps on gas cylinders that are in storage or not in use
- Do not lift cylinders by the valve protection cap
- Do not store compressed gas cylinders in areas where they can be exposed to chemicals labeled "Corrosive"
- Stand to the side of the regulator when opening the valve
- If a cylinder is leaking around a valve or a fuse plug, move it to an outside area away from where work is performed and tag it to indicate the item is defective
- Separate oxygen cylinders and fuel gas cylinders by 20 feet or a 5-foot high barrier with a 5-hour fire rating

Safety Tips for Welding

- Obey all signs posted in the welding area
- Do not leave oily rags, paper, or other combustible materials in the welding, cutting, or brazing area
- Do not wear contact lenses while welding
- When welding, wear a welding helmet with filter plates and lenses, welding gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and an apron

Oxy-Fuel Welding

- Do not remove the valve wrench from acetylene cylinders while the cylinder is in use
- Use the red hose for gas fuel and the green hose for oxygen
- Do not use worn or cracked hoses
- Do not use oil, grease or other lubricants on the regulator
- "Blow out" hoses before attaching the torch
- Ignite torches with friction lighters only Do not use a cigarette lighter
- Bleed oxygen and fuel lines at the end of the work shift
- Open compressed gas cylinder valves slowly Open fully when in use to eliminate possible leakage around the cylinder valve stem
- Purge oxygen valves, regulators, and lines before use

Hazardous Materials

- Follow the instructions on the label and in the corresponding Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical product used in the workplace
- Do not use protective clothing or equipment that has split seams, pinholes, cuts, tears, or other visible signs of damage
- Each time gloves are used, wash them
- Always wash your hands after removing the gloves
- Do not use chemicals from unlabeled containers or unmarked cylinders
- Always use chemical goggles and a face shield before handling chemicals labeled "Corrosive" or "Caustic", and when a splash hazard exists - such as transferring liquid from one container to another
- Do not store chemical containers labeled "Oxidizer" with containers labeled "Corrosive", "Caustic" or "Flammable"
- Do not smoke while handling chemicals labeled "Flammable"
- Never refuel a hot engine
- Wear impermeable gloves when refueling equipment

Pesticide Storage, Transport, and Disposal

- Store chemicals and fuels in accordance with the requirements on the Safety Data Sheet (SDS)
- Store chemicals away from Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), especially respirators
- Keep incompatible chemicals away from one another
- Be mindful that some chemicals contain solvents that can escape into the air and release harmful vapors unless their containers are properly sealed
- Store chemicals in their original manufactured containers with the original labels If chemicals are transferred to another container, ensure that the new container is properly labeled
- Do not handle or store chemicals near food, water or incompatible chemicals
- Secure chemicals in their proper containers on the vehicle before proceeding so they cannot move, fall or break

- Keep a detailed record of the chemicals being transported
- Utilize appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling hazardous substances
- Read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and the manufacturer's label before storing, handling, applying, and disposing of chemicals

Contact with Insects, Rodents and Pets

- Avoid animals in nests or dens
- Control and dispose of food and garbage in the work area to avoid attracting pests
- Do not leave your vehicle if dogs are or appear to be threatening. Contact the homeowner, if possible leave and return, if necessary
- Do not pick up or disturb a spider
- Do not touch rodents, even if they look dead
- Do not wear cologne or perfume, which may attract animals
- If you are allergic to insects, keep medication with you at all times. Alert coworkers of your allergy so they can assist in the event of an emergency
- Keep skin covered by wearing a hat, socks, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and high boots
- Never pick up, disturb or corner a snake - move away quickly
- Pre-plan if possible, contact the homeowner before arrival to request pets be locked away
- Tuck pants into boots and be mindful of exposed skin on the neck, wrists, and ankles
- Wear the appropriate repellents for insects/animals

Vehicle Safety

- Always observe posted speed limits and warning signs
- Always wear a safety belt when in moving vehicles
- Inspect vehicles and trailers at the beginning of the workday
- Maintain a slow vehicle speed in inclement weather
- Never allow passengers to ride on trailers
- Never modify equipment, machines or vehicles without first verifying compliance with the original manufacturer and regulatory agencies, such as The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Report defects and ensure repairs are made before operating unsafe vehicles