Grounds for Safety



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Your workplace may have grounds to be maintained – perhaps even lawns and flower gardens. Groundskeepers take care of this outdoor landscape, mainly in the summer months. Like any job, groundskeeping has hazards, and each calls for precautions.

Powered machinery such as mowers, trimmers, tillers and chippers slice through grass, weeds, branches and soil. These machines also easily slice through human fingers and toes. They can send chips, stones and other particles flying faster than the human eye can blink.

Following are safety tips for groundskeepers:

Wear safety-toed footwear and safety eyewear when you run powered machinery. Gloves protect your hands from many hazards including vibration, but keep gloves and hands away from rotating machinery

Before reaching into equipment to remove jams or make adjustments, turn it off. Make sure all moving parts have come to a stop. Unplug electrical equipment, and remove the spark plug in gasoline-powered equipment before putting your hand near blades.

Fuel gasoline equipment before you start work. To prevent fire and explosion, wait until the equipment cools down before refueling. Use only approved cords and outlets for electrical equipment, and protect the cord from cuts and other damage.

Get training before you attempt to operate a tractor. Make sure it is in neutral before starting the engine. Run a tractor straight up and down hills rather than across the slope.

Working in the summer sun can be a groundskeeping bonus, but you need to protect

yourself from the sun’s hazards. Protect your skin from sun exposure by covering up with lightweight clothing and applying sunscreen. Wear a hat with a brim, and don’t forget sunglasses!

Heat illness can kill you. In hot weather, particularly if it is humid, you can become seriously dehydrated and the mineral balance in your body can be disrupted. Drink water or sports drinks frequently, and eat lightly salted snacks. Take your breaks in the shade. Go slow at the beginning of hot weather until your body adjusts.

Overhead power lines have killed many workers who never even noticed them. Touching a line with a ladder, or with pruning shears, tree branch, pool cleaning pole, irrigation pipe, truck box or other object can allow the electricity to be conducted through you to the ground

Avoid long-term pain and injury. Eat well, exercise and take steps to avoid awkward postures and reduce the effects of static positions.

Landscaping has other hazards, including toxic fertilizers, pesticides, poisonous insects, spiders, snakes, crushing hazards in stonework and rotating power takeoffs. Get the training you need, and stay alert while you work.