Safe Materials Storage – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

In the landscaping industry, workers handle a wide range of materials, including soil, mulch, stones, chemicals, tools, and equipment. Improper storage of these materials can lead to accidents, injuries, and environmental damage.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

The dangers associated with improper materials storage in landscaping are significant and varied.

Specific Risks:

1. **Tripping and Falling Hazards**
   - **Obstructed Walkways:** Materials like hoses, tools, bags of soil, or piles of debris left in walkways can create tripping hazards, leading to falls and injuries.
   - **Unstable Stacks:** Stacks of materials like bricks, stones, or bags of mulch that are not properly secured can collapse, causing injuries to workers or damage to equipment.
1. **Chemical Hazards**
   - **Improper Storage:** Chemicals such as pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides must be stored properly to prevent leaks, spills, or contamination.
   - **Incompatible Chemicals:** Storing incompatible chemicals together can result in dangerous reactions, including fires, explosions, or the release of toxic gases.
1. **Heavy Loads**
   - **Manual Handling Injuries:** Improperly stored heavy materials, such as bags of soil, stones, or equipment, can lead to strains, sprains, and other musculoskeletal injuries.
   - **Falling Objects:** Materials that are not securely stored can fall from heights.

1. **Environmental Damage**

- **Soil and Water Contamination:** Leaks or spills from improperly stored chemicals can contaminate soil.
- **Wildlife Harm:** Chemicals that leach harm wildlife and disrupt ecosystems.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

How to ensure safe storage on the job site.

General Storage Practices

1. **Organized Storage Areas**

- **Designated Areas:** Set up designated storage areas for different types of materials, such as chemicals, tools, and bulk materials like soil or mulch.
- **Clear Walkways:** Ensure that all walkways are kept clear of materials and debris.

1. **Stable Stacking**

- **Proper Stacking Techniques:** Stack materials like bricks, stones, or bags of soil securely. Use pallets, shelves, or other supports to keep stacks stable and off the ground.
- **Weight Distribution:** Heavier items should be placed on the bottom, with lighter items on top.

1. **Safe Lifting and Handling**

- **Manual Handling**: Lift with your legs, not your back, and avoid twisting while lifting.
- **Mechanical Assistance:** Use forklifts, dollies, or other equipment to move heavy or bulky materials.

Chemical Storage

1. **Proper Storage of Chemicals**

- **Labeling and Identification**: Ensure that all chemicals are properly labeled with their contents and hazards.
- **Safe Containers:** Use containers that are designed to store specific chemicals, ensuring that they are sealed and free from leaks. Avoid storing chemicals in makeshift or damaged containers.

1. **Separation of Incompatible Chemicals**

- **Segregated Storage:** Store incompatible chemicals separately to prevent dangerous reactions.
- **Ventilation:** Ensure that storage areas for chemicals are well-ventilated.

1. **Spill Prevention and Response**

- **Spill Containment:** Use spill containment measures, such as secondary containment trays or drip pans, to catch leaks or spills from chemical containers.
- **Emergency Response:** Have spill kits and emergency procedures in place to respond to chemical spills.

Tool and Equipment Storage:

1. **Proper Tool Storage**

- **Secure Storage:** Keep sharp tools, such as saws or pruners, stored safely to prevent accidental cuts.
- **Maintenance and Inspection:** Regularly inspect tools and equipment for wear or damage.

1. **Equipment Storage**

- **Protect from the Elements:** Store equipment like lawnmowers, trimmers, and other machinery in covered areas to protect them from the weather.
- **Fuel Storage:** Store fuel for equipment in approved containers, away from ignition sources.

Training and Awareness

1. **Training on Safe Storage Practices:**

- **Comprehensive Training:** Provide training for all workers on safe materials storage practices.
- **Refresher Courses:** Conduct regular refresher courses to reinforce safe storage practices.

1. **Promote a Culture of Safety**

- **Lead by Example:** Supervisors and experienced workers should model safe storage practices.

FINAL WORD

Safe materials storage in landscaping is crucial for preventing accidents, protecting the environment, and ensuring a productive work environment.