# Yarding Safety Meeting Kit




For those who work in yarding operations, there are a number of exposures and risks to consider in order to protect themselves. There are some simple precautions to take to avoid hurting yourself or others.

## COMMON DANGERS FROM YARDING EQUIPMENT

- **Lawn Mowers.** Most fatalities occurred when a riding mower flipped, say, over an embankment, pinning the operator underneath. A less common, but just as deadly cause is carbon monoxide poisoning.
- **String Trimmers and Power Clippers.** With its super-fast rotation, the string in a string trimmer can easily cut through your skin or send debris flying, hitting you or someone nearby. Power clippers have been the cause of finger amputations.
- **Chain Saws.** Chain saws can inflict horrific damage. You can easily cut yourself with the sharp motorized blades while cutting errant tree branches.
- **Pressure Washers.** This is a machine that concentrates water into a stream with 30 to 80 times the force of water from a garden hose, allowing it to slice through any number of materials. Lacerations to the hands and fingers are the most common injury, followed by strains and bruises.

## SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR YARDING EQUIPMENT

**Stay Safe Using a Mower**

- Pay extra attention when you’re mowing on an incline (and refer to the manufacturer’s recommendations of how steep an incline you can mow). If you’re on a riding mower, drive it up and down slopes to avoid it tipping over and pinning you underneath. With a walk-behind mower, it’s the opposite: Mow parallel to the slope, not up and down, because it’s easier to control the mower when you’re not struggling to push it up an incline.
- If a stray branch gets in your way while you’re using a walk-behind mower, don’t just bend over and pick it up with the mower running, because you could easily cut your fingers on the mower’s blade. Always release the mower’s bail lever?also referred to as the “deadman” control?so that the blade stops.
- To avoid slipping, don’t mow the grass when it’s wet. Also, you won’t get a

good cut with wet grass.

**Stay Safe Using a String Trimmer or Power Clipper.** Although string trimmers have a shield to deflect debris that might kick up, wear gloves, protective eyewear, boots, and long pants. All gas models and some electric models can be so loud that you need hearing protection. Follow the same precautions for using other kinds of power clippers.

- Never start a gas trimmer in a shed or garage, where carbon monoxide exhaust gas can accumulate?it can be lethal.
- When you start a gas trimmer with a pull cord, make sure the trimmer is on solid ground to keep it?and yourself?stable.
- If you're using a corded electric string trimmer, keep the cord safely out of the way so that you don't trip over it and fall, losing control of the trimmer. And take care not to accidentally slice the power cord with the trimmer.
- Use a string trimmer only when you're standing on the ground so that you don't lose your balance. And keep the cutting head below your waist for the same reason.
- Always cut away from yourself to avoid being hit by the weeds or brush you are trying to get rid of.

**Stay safe using a chain saw.** To avoid getting cut, wear snug-fitting clothing and sturdy work boots, preferably steel-toed. Shield your legs with cut-resistant chaps, your hands with protective gloves, and your head with a helmet with a face shield. Follow these steps to stay safe:

- Before you start the saw, check that all its parts are in working order. Keep the cutting chain properly sharpened, tensioned, and oiled. A sharp saw ensures smoother cutting and can help prevent kickback.
- When starting the saw, be sure you and the saw are on solid ground, and grip the saw firmly while pull-starting it; most handles include a spot for securing the saw with one foot while pulling the starter cord.
- Avoid sawing with the tip of the chain and bar, where kickback typically occurs.
- Saw only tree limbs you can reach from the ground. Never saw on a ladder or while holding the saw above your shoulders, because that can easily throw you off-balance.
- If you're clearing away fallen trees after a storm, treat any downed electrical lines as live, and wait for the utility crew's okay to proceed.

**Stay Safe Using a Pressure Washers**

- Put on protective gear before you start power-washing: Goggles, long pants, and sturdy footwear.
- Don't use a pressure washer while standing on a ladder, because pulling the trigger can cause recoil and throw you off-balance.
- Stay aware of your surroundings to avoid pointing the nozzle toward yourself, other people, or pets.
- Take extra care on wet surfaces, and cause you to slip and lose control.
- If your washer comes with interchangeable spray tips, turn off the machine before swapping one for another to make sure you aren't blasted by a powerful stream of water.

## BEST PRACTICES TO AVOID YARDING INJURIES

1. **Prevent overuse injury.** Take a few minutes to stretch and warm up before you grab the pruning shears or rake. As you work, try to change tasks every 30 minutes or so to avoid a repetitive-use injury.
2. **Lift properly.** When lifting anything, bend from the hips and knees, not the back. If you are moving material from one place to another, use a cart or wheelbarrow to avoid straining your back.
3. **Wear gloves and protective clothing.** Not only do gloves improve your grip on tools, but they also provide protection from splinters, debris and poison ivy.
4. **Stay hydrated.** When it is warm outside, it is easy to become dehydrated. Drink plenty of fluids before and during yard work. Take a break and sit in the shade if you start to feel lightheaded.
5. **Wear sunscreen.** Don?t be deceived by a cloudy day. UV rays come through the clouds the same as when it is sunny out, so sunscreen is vital when you spend prolonged time outdoors. Use zinc- or titanium-based physical sunscreens versus chemical sunscreens that penetrate your skin. Gardeners should apply SPF to the neck area, which is easily neglected. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat can also help protect the neck and face.
6. **Pesky bug bites.** Mosquitos thrive in damp areas, so empty anything in your yard that contains standing water, such as gutters, pet water dishes, planters, buckets, pool covers, old tires or birdbaths.

## FINAL WORD

People suffer injuries from overexertion, dehydration, cuts, and amputations in the use of power equipment. But there are also injuries from ladder falls which cause more injuries than equipment.