

October Safety Topic

of the Month

The arrival of fall means the arrival of yard work! Make sure you remember these safety tips before tackling those autumn chores!

All information taken from About.com: Landscaping

Fall Yard Work – Do you have these valuable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items available at your home?

- Earplugs
- Goggles or Safety Glasses
- Footwear with good traction
- Tight-fitting clothing (long pants, a long-sleeve shirt)
- Gloves
- Back brace
- Ball cart
- Steel-toed boots
- Helmet, when performing chainsaw work on large trees

For any work involving digging, make sure you call first!

- In Missouri, the number is 1-800-**DIG-RITE** (344-7483).
- In Illinois, call **JULIE** by dialing 811 or 1-800-892-0123.

Yard Safety Tips for Using Axes and Hatchets

- Wear steel-toed boots, heavy gloves, fitted clothing (long pants and a long-sleeved shirt) and safety glasses.
- Make sure the blade is sharp. Ironically, dull blades make staying safe around these tools more difficult than do sharp blades.
- Chop so that the arc of your swing won't end up coming back in the direction of your body.
- As with chainsaws, it's best not to use axes and hatchets until someone well-versed in their use has personally instructed you.

Yard Safety Tips for Using Chain Saws and Hedgers

- Plant both feet firmly on the ground when cutting.
- Avoid making cuts while standing on a ladder: leave the aerial acrobatics to tree services.
- Be aware of your center of gravity: don't overreach.
- You shouldn't be raising the machine up above shoulder level; doing so would cause instability.
- Shut off the engine prior to removing branches stuck in the teeth of your machine.
- With chain saws, always be conscious of the possibility of kickback.

Heavy Equipment Safety for Electrical Devices

- Make sure the ON / OFF switch is in the OFF position before plugging device into an outlet.
- You shouldn't use any power equipment under wet conditions, but this goes double for electrical power equipment.
- Don't take extension cords for granted. Old, nicked up extension cords should be replaced. Make sure extension cords are the right size for the device's electric current capacity.
- Be conscious of the whereabouts of the cords at all times, so that you don't trip over them or sever them with your power equipment.
- Unplug electric power equipment prior to making any adjustments to it.

Heavy Equipment Safety for Gas-Powered Devices

- Disconnect the spark plug wires prior to making any adjustments, as when you tune up lawn mowers
- Don't refill a gas tank while the device is running or when the engine is still hot, and wipe up any spillage.
- Don't leave gas-powered machines running in an enclosed area.
- Store gas in a proper container, clearly marked, G-A-S.

Power Equipment Safety: String Trimmers

- Prior to start-up, check for any damage caused by past usage, fasteners loosened through vibration, or fuel leakage.
- The key to operating string trimmers safely is achieving a good form and maintaining it consistently.
- It's easier to operate string trimmers with the proper form if you stay balanced in your footwork. Don't over-extend your arms, which could cause you to lose your balance.
- Likewise, don't use string trimmers (or mowers) when the grass is wet, lest you slip.

- Fatigue can ruin your form. As you get tired, you tend to get sloppy in your trimming approach. Using a shoulder strap for your trimmer can help cut down on fatigue.
- Swing the trimmer in such a way that the arc of your swing won't end up bringing the rotating string head back in the direction of your body. Maintain the cutting head at an angle of about thirty degrees to the ground.
- The tip of the cutting string should be doing the cutting.
- A slower, measured swinging motion is safer than a faster, unrestrained motion.
- Keep the string head below waist level as you swing the trimmer.

Heavy Equipment Safety: Garden Tillers

- Have your utility lines marked, so that you'll know where not to dig (in fact, do so even if it's only with a shovel that you're digging). In the U.S., 62 "Call Before You Dig" centers are located around the country. Simply dial 811 on the telephone to reach a local representative, who will initiate the process of having the utility companies mark the lines for you.
- Never clean dirt off the tines while the machine is running.
- While small garden tillers aren't too difficult to control, the larger ones can be real beasts! Exercise particular caution if you have to rototill on an incline: many injuries have been incurred from large garden tillers falling onto their operators.

Lawn Mowers Safety Tips: Operating Walk-Behind Mowers

- Check the lawn first for objects that shouldn't be there: bottles, stones, etc. Exercise similar caution when using lawn edgers. Propelled objects cause many lawn mower-related injuries.
- Check that lawn mower guards and shields are functional.
- Set wheel height **prior** to starting the engine.
- If you're using a bag attachment, turn the lawn mower off prior to removing or re-attaching the bag. Better yet, when using mulching mowers, there's really no need to use a bag at all.
- In summer, mow in the evening for the sake of your grass but, for your own sake, early enough that there's still plenty of light by which to see.
- Be sure to mow only when the grass is dry, to reduce risk of injury through slipping.
- Very steep slopes are dangerous to mow. Consider an alternative to grass in these cases, such as growing ground covers like Blue Rug juniper.
- If you're truly concerned about lawn mower safety, the best lawn mowers to use are reel mowers, because they're human-powered. But reel mowers may not be a viable option for those with large yards.

Resources:

Missouri 1 call: <http://www.mo1call.com>

Illinois 1 call: <http://www.illinois1call.com>

About.com: landscaping www.about.com/landscaping

FMD Injury Data Report: September 2009

Injury Date	Description	Lost Time
September 4th	Employee had seizure due to personal medical condition, fell and broke finger.	N
September 9th	Employee had sharp back pain while moving heavy trash to put in the tilt truck	N
September 21st	Employee had seizure and fell, striking forehead on a glass table top.	N
September 24th	Employee had pain in upper back pushing tilt cart onto compactor ramp.	N
September 25th	Employee was crossing Metro tracks and twisted left ankle.	N

Hundred Day Goal:

As of October 2nd, 2009, FMD is at 102 days without a lost time accident. On January 8th, 2010 FMD will be at 200 days without a lost time accident.