



Loss Control Insight

Safety Tips for Seasonal Workers

One of the great things about being young is feeling you will live forever and bad things couldn't possibly happen to you. It would be great if that were true. Reality is of course quite different. Take the workplace, for instance. Every year many young workers are killed or seriously injured on their first job. Their lives and working careers are over before they had really begun. Why? Because they were unaware of job hazards or chose to ignore them.

What does this mean to you as a young worker? Before you tackle any job, you must be trained so you can recognize hazards and avoid them. These hazards may not be obvious. Our ordinary experiences outside of the job do not adequately prepare us to deal with the dangers of chemicals, gases, fast-moving machinery, electrical current, fires and even violence in the workplace.

Just about the first thing you need to do on your job is to find out who is in charge of your safety training. It could be your supervisor or it could be someone in the safety department. Where can you get the information you need?

Before tackling a new job or entering a new work environment, make sure you understand the hazards.

Personal Protective Equipment

The best way to avoid injuries is to eliminate the hazards whenever possible, replace hazardous materials with less hazardous alternatives and use engineering controls. In some cases, however, you cannot eliminate the hazard altogether and you must use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to guard against injuries. Before using any PPE, always refer to the manufacturer's operating manual to learn safety precautions and potential dangers of that piece of equipment.

Examples of PPE-and when to use them--include:

- eye protectors when operating powered tools, power tilling and breaking rocks or concrete by hand using a pick;
- sunglasses when working in direct sunlight;
- sunscreen with a high PF factor, even when it's cloudy;
- face shields when using trimmers, brush cutters and chippers;
- hearing protectors when working in noisy environments or operating gas powered equipment;
- respirators when applying pesticides, painting or welding;
- safety footwear, such as steel toe boots, if lifting heavy objects or working around heavy equipment;
- hardhats when trimming trees, working with low overhead clearance or when play is underway; and
- insulated gloves when using vibrating equipment.

Hand Tools

Select the tool that's most suitable for the task and for the operator. Hand tools with ergonomic features are easier to use and can prevent musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Here are some hand tool safety measures:

- Use new tools with ergonomic features that allow for neutral postures and positions.
- Check all tools for damage or defects. Repair or replace defective or unsafe tools.
- Replace or repair damaged handles.
- Keep all cutting tools sharp.
- Properly store all tools when not in use.
- Protect the cutting edge.

Shoveling and Digging

Before any digging, always the location of underground electrical and gas lines, cables and pipes must be established. Your supervisor should be responsible for this activity. Use the right shovel for the job and soil type. A light shovel (about 3 pounds) is suitable for shoveling snow while a heavier shovel (about 6.5 pounds) is better for shoveling soil. Choose a shovel length that fits the task:

- A garden shovel should be between elbow and chest height.
- A snow shovel handle should come up to chest height.

Refueling Equipment

Strictly limit the number of employees who do refueling to those who have been trained and authorized to perform this procedure.

Follow these safety precautions when refueling:

- Shut off the engine and let it cool first.
- Remove the fuel cap slowly and hold it at the semi-locked position until pressure is released.
- Allow the nozzle to empty by keeping it in the filler opening for several seconds after shutting off fuel flow.
- Replace the fuel cap after checking to see that the venting is not clogged.
- Store fuel in UL Listed and FM approved Type II safety cans.
- Maintain fire extinguishers and other firefighting equipment nearby.
- Do not smoke, have an open flame or any other source of ignition nearby.
- If fuel spills on equipment, wipe up and allow any residue to dry before starting the engine.
- Do not run if your clothing catches fire. Stop, drop and roll. Apply a blanket or use a fire extinguisher on a coworker who catches fire.

Grinders and Chippers

- Always wear hearing, head, eye and face protection.
- Shut off equipment before removing clogged materials or making adjustments. Prevent operation by disengaging clutch, locking out controls and removing the key.
- Barricade the area around operating equipment to prevent others from entering.
- Never feed small, short pieces of wood by hand. This can result in death or dismemberment.

Powered Trimmers

- Hold and guide tool with both hands to reduce wrist strain.
- Always wear eye protection.
- Inspect hedges and plants for any foreign objects before trimming.
- Keep the cord behind you to avoid snipping it or tripping over it. Leave adequate slack for normal work motions.

Power Lawn Mowers

- Always refer to the manufacturer's operating manual for safety precautions and potential dangers of a specific lawn mower.
- Inspect the mower for damage or defects prior to starting.
- Ensure that guards and shields are in place and working properly.
- Always wear non-slip footwear and hearing protection.
- Clear the work area of rocks, bottles and debris that could be ejected by the blades.
- Always keep hands and feet away from the blades.
- Inspect for hidden hazards such as holes, roots, drainpipes and insect nests.

- Confirm automatic shut-offs function properly.
- Never reach under the mower. Disconnect the spark plug wire before inspecting the blades.
- Do not make wheel height adjustments when the motor is running.
- Shut off mower when crossing graveled areas.
- Never leave a running mower unattended. Never remove the grass catcher or unclog chutes with the motor running.
- Do not mow when surfaces are too wet or slippery.
- Avoid mowing straight up and down a mound or hill. Cut the grass diagonally or across mounds to prevent being struck by the mower or blades.
- Never refuel the mower while the engine is running.

Fairway and Rough Mowers

- Always refer to the manufacturer's operating manual for safety precautions and potential dangers of a specific piece of mowing machinery.
- Always wear hearing and head protection.
- Inspect the mower prior to starting. Ensure the reels are sharp and secure.
- Use "3 points of contact" when mounting and dismounting mowers.
- Clear the work area of debris and objects that might be ejected by the reels.
- Mow slopes and hills diagonally rather than sideways for greater stability, unless the mower is counter-balanced.
- Reduce speed on slopes and when making sharp turns to prevent tipping or loss of control.
- Check the area for rocks, holes and other physical hazards.
- Inspect the blades and shaft if the mower runs into a rock or stump. Damaged blades can cause vibration, which can loosen the reels.
- Disengage power to attachments and stop the motor before leaving the operator's position by putting the transmission in park, setting the brake and removing the ignition key.
- Do not suddenly stop or start the mower when going up or down steep hills.
- Do not mount or dismount while the mower is running, because your toes can slip under a running mower's housing and be struck by the blades.
- Never leave a running mower unattended.
- Never transport passengers.

Grass Trimmers and Brush Cutters

- Follow the manufacturer's operating manual at all times.
- Be aware that rotating cutting tools can throw objects or cut the operator.
- Wear sturdy, snug-fitting clothing along with gloves, safety boots, a face shield and eye and hearing protection.
- Hold the cutter securely in both hands and ensure the cutter is tight.
- Replace bent, warped, damaged or dull cutters.
- Check to make sure the throttle springs back to the idle position.
- Keep people away from starting and operating areas.
- Check the area for stones, glass, metal and debris.
- Start the unit on firm ground or other solid surfaces in an open area.
- Maintain good balance and proper footing when operating. Do not overreach.
- Secure cutter to prevent fuel spillage and damage during transport.
- Adjust harness and hand grip to suit work positions.
- Stop the engine before putting cutter down.

- Use the cutter only at ground level.
- Shut off engine before cleaning out clogged or stuck cutter.
- Never leave a running unit unattended.

Golf Cart Safety

Because golf carts operate at relatively slow speeds, it's easy to overlook safety procedures. But golf cart accidents can cause serious injury and death.

Between 1992 and 2001, golf cart accidents caused an average of 739 nonfatal injuries annually that led to lost workdays, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. From 1994 to 2000, the Bureau reported an average of five deaths per year associated with golf carts.

Many carts lack safety features such as seat belts and air bags. That's why it's even more crucial to establish and follow safety rules. Managers should enforce the following rules and communicate proper operating procedures to all employees to ensure safe operation of golf carts:

- Limit cart use to authorized employees who have a valid driver's license.
- Provide cart operation safety training to all new employees.
- Never operate a cart under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Limit capacity of golf cart to specified design and restrictions (i.e., two passenger, four passenger, etc).
- Operate cart from driver side only.
- Keep hands and feet within cart at all times.
- Remain seated at all times when driving the cart - and make sure passengers stay seated at all times.
- Lock brake before exiting cart.
- Ensure that cart is at a complete stop before getting in and out.
- Operate carts in designated areas only.
- Drive over steep or uneven terrain with caution.
- Approach steep or uneven terrain vertically to avoid tipping over and sliding of cart.
- Avoid driving over wet or muddy surfaces.
- Slow down when approaching corners or speed bumps.
- Slow down when driving on hills.
- Always turn to see behind cart while reversing and never try to go in reverse downhill.
- Drive defensively! Always be aware of your surroundings and keep your eyes on the path ahead of you.

Following these operating rules will help you avoid or minimize golf cart accidents.