

ACCIDENT PREVENTION



Perform regular tune-ups and safety checks on power equipment. Follow manufacturer specifications.

You can never do enough

Production, liability, insurance concerns dictate more training and proper equipment.

by Mark Dlugoss

■ In any given year, the number of accidents associated with mowers reaches between 60,000 and 80,000, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. While most are attributed to consumers, a growing number of professional operators are included.

One of the easiest ways to reduce accidents in the field is to make sure crews are equipped with personal safety equipment—especially when pesticides are involved.

Using safety equipment is important for several reasons. First, there is the personal protection that should be provided for employees in the course of performing their jobs. Then, there is the loss of worker productivity associated with an injured worker, not to mention the legal repercussions.

"If a worker is injured (in the course of performing his job), he's

not going to help your production," says Tom Delaney, government affairs director for the Professional Lawn Care Association of America. He refers, of course, to the time the employee spends on workmen's compensation. "Then, you always have the possibility of a lawsuit if you are not providing adequate safety for your employees."

Recommended vs. required—

Depending on the piece of equipment used, employees should have the minimum *required* protection. Employers should also strive to outfit them with the *recommended* protection.

For instance, when using mowers, workers should have safety glasses (goggles or face shield), ear protectors (or ear plugs) and gloves for minimum protection. Recommended protection could include hardhats and safety vests.

"Unfortunately, operators become safety-conscious only after they have been hurt in the pocketbook and their workmen's compensation claims start going up,"

says Ron Damgaard, president of Otto Damgaard Sons, Mount Prospect, Ill. He is chairman of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America's safety committee.

Damgaard suggests that an employee, in the course of everyday work, wear boots with a protective toe and non-slip soles,



Eye protection should be your first concern when operating high-speed trimmers.

close-fitting trousers and a shirt. He adds that a worker is headed for trouble if he shows up for work wearing loose-fitting clothes.

It is vital that employees using pesticides are equipped with the proper safety equipment. Numerous state and federal regulations may require special safety equipment when working with restricted-use pesticides (use, storage, mixing and loading). When dealing with such chemicals, you must refer to the MSDS and the pesticide labels for the proper safety equipment.

Pesticide safety—While there are no equipment requirements for general-use pesticides (those purchased over-the-

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Eye-wash stations are required for companies with workers applying control products.



Sprayer manufacturers either carry their own protective clothing lines, or can help you obtain the proper gear.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

counter), restricted-use pesticides require that "certified" applicators should have appropriate dress.

"Start with a wide-brim hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants and chemical-resistant gloves," suggests Dr. Dennis Murphy, professor of agricultural engineering at Penn State University. "Use unlined rubber, latex, neoprene or nitrile gloves. Never use leather or cloth. Wear sturdy work shoes or rubber boots, not sneakers or sandals."

Applicators also must—by law—wear personal protective equipment when handling pesticides. Again, applicators are required to consult the MSDS sheets and pesticide labels to determine what protective clothing and equipment is necessary.

"Labels today are becoming more informative on this issue," explains Win Hock, director of the pesticide education program at Penn State. "The only thing you can do is generalize by rule of thumb—the pesticides of lesser toxicity usually don't have quite the requirements for protective equipment, as opposed to the ones that are highly toxic. Then, you frequently have to have a full complement of protective clothing."

Hock recommends that *every* employer maintain a full complement of protective clothing and equipment. "It doesn't mean you have to use it on every occasion," he points out. "A person who is a pesticide applicator should have at least everything available in the event it is needed."

Train, train, train—Another important piece of safety "equipment" is educational in nature. Many green industry associations and manufacturers have complete libraries of literature, safety programs and videos. This material covers everything from how to properly use equipment to correct maintenance procedures.

Delaney urges employers to use training as a piece of safety equipment. Not only does a safety program make good personal sense, he says that it just makes good business sense.

"To be a good businessman, to protect yourself from liability and to care about your employees by having them properly trained—all make good business sense," says Delaney. "Whether things are required by law or not, it behooves a good businessman to operate in a responsible, professional manner."

—Mark Dlugoss is a freelance writer in Cleveland, Ohio. This is his second piece for *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*.

PESTICIDES

- Long-sleeve shirt
 - Trousers
 - Waterproof trousers
- (Depending on the formulation and the chemical used, each pesticide—listed on its label and MSDS sheets—lists its required equipment protection, which could include such equipment as respirators, face shields or goggles; overalls or waterproof pants and jacket; waterproof, wide-brimmed hats; waterproof apron, waterproof gloves, and waterproof boots.)

CHAIN SAWS

- Helmet/Hard hat
- Safety glasses with side shield; goggles or face shield
- Hearing protection
- Chain-saw-resistant pants/chaps
- Chain-saw-resistant gloves, jacket and boots

LAWN MOWERS

- Heavy-duty shoes with non-slip soles
- Long pants
- Close-fitting clothes
- Gloves
- Safety glasses
- Goggles
- Face shield
- Safety Vests
- Dust mask in dusty conditions
- Ear protectors/ear plugs

LINE TRIMMERS

- Leggings/chaps
- Face shields (or combination face visor made of nylon mesh, earmuffs and goggles)
- Hearing protection
- Debris shields (kept on trimmer)

MISCELLANEOUS

- Support belt for heavy lifting
- Ear plugs or ear muffs for noise prevention
- Sun protection:
 - Wide-brimmed hat
 - Long-sleeved shirt
 - Sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or more
 - Sunglasses