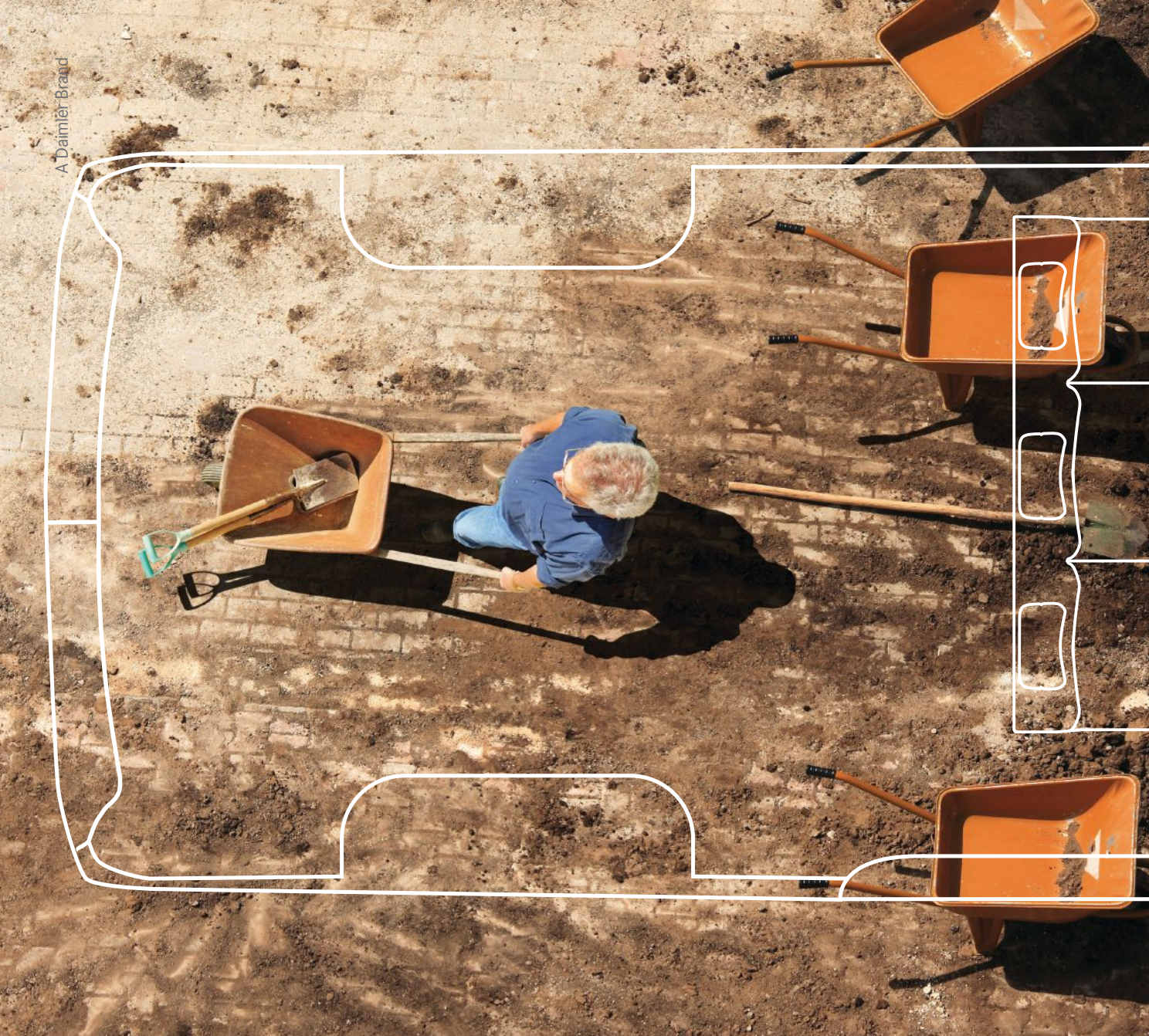


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HEARMEOUT

BETH GERACI SENIOR EDITOR

Contact Beth at 216/706-3756 or via e-mail at bgeraci@questex.com.

Well equipped

Rob Foster of Strata-G Communications sent me the Husqvarna photos today. There were so many, it took more than an hour to download them.

When I came to the shots of myself, it felt surreal. I scrolled through them slowly, savoring each one as one might savor a rich dessert.

Why? Because the photos, taken in July at a Husqvarna demo, were taken from a photographer's perspective. And the photographer's perspective of me proved to be vastly different from my own.

That the contrast should be so stark amuses me. Throughout the two-day demo, I felt insecure about putting my limited landscape experience on display for all to see.

The photos, however, portrayed an adept, confident newcomer who rose undaunted to each challenge presented.

The demo was held concurrently with the unveiling of Husqvarna's new state-of-the-art research and development center in Charlotte, NC. I went to Charlotte oblivious to what level of participation was expected of me. And that was the key to everything that followed.

It was daunting enough being the newcomer in my group, and even more so being the only female. I would have been quite content to sit idly by and watch as the guys in my group worked the tractors



The **clanking of the axe** against the tree rang out ... When the tree careened to the ground, **I felt triumphant.**

and the chainsaws and the pole saws without me.

So when Husqvarna chainsaw safety pro Cary Shepherd pointed to a tree and told me I was going to chop it down with an axe, I was surprised.

But Shepherd presented it so matter-of-factly, I didn't know saying "no" was an option. It didn't even occur to me.

So off I went to chop down a tree. As the guys looked on in silence, and the clanking of the axe against the tree rang out, it felt like an eternity. But when the tree careened to the ground, I felt triumphant. That was my reward.

And so it went throughout the day. Through the chainsaw demo. And the edgers. And the zero turns. I felt pained and elated all at once.

The Husqvarna safety crew stood closely by through it all. They provided us with full safety gear and were quick to intervene when necessary. Thanks to their care and expertise, I always felt safe and protected. Through their example, I not only learned how to better operate landscape equipment, I also learned the importance of working responsibly and safely.

I am grateful to them for that. And I am just as grateful to them for throwing me into the fire—for giving me the tools to not only cut down a tree, but to grow.

For more on safety in the industry, see our cover story (beginning on page 26).

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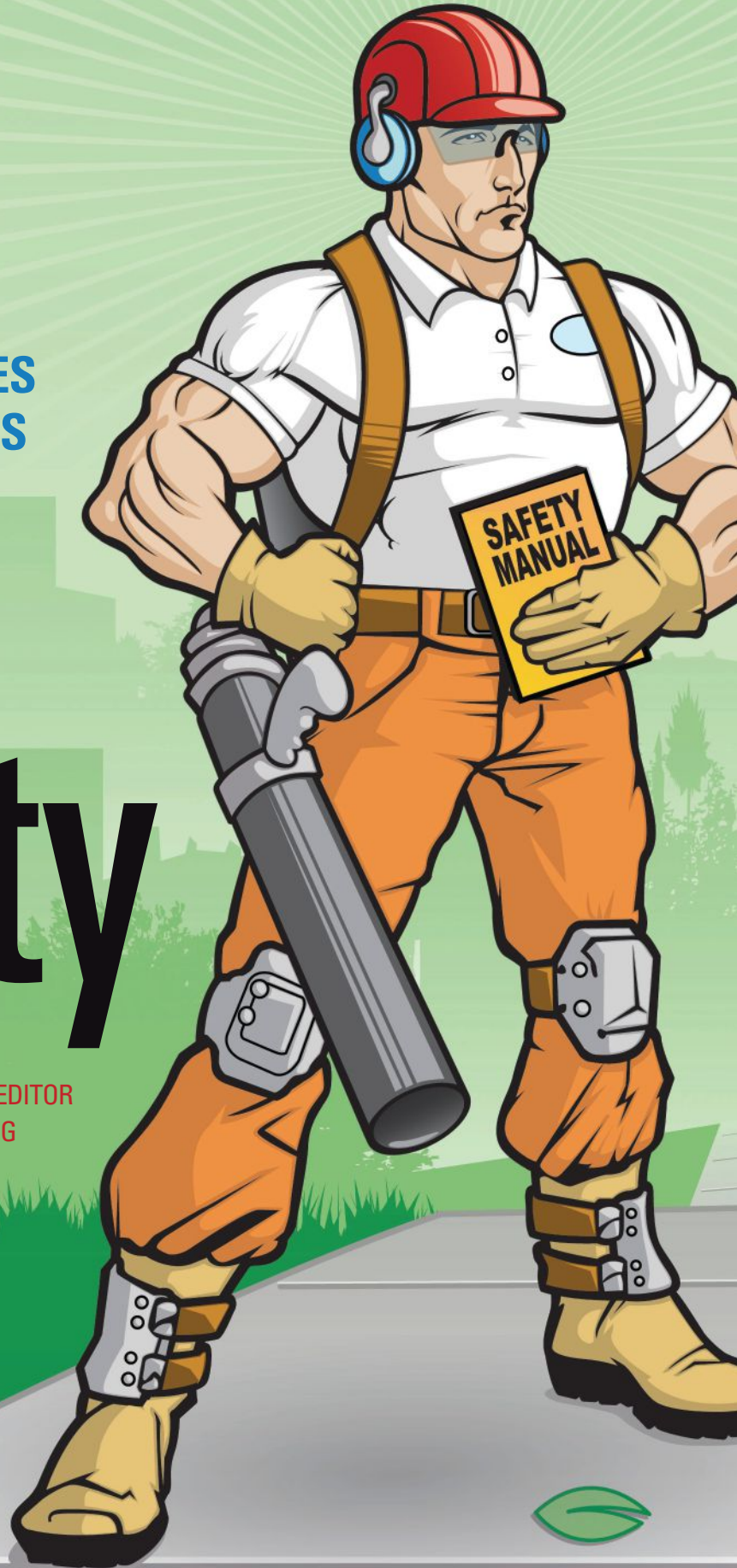
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Safety

STORY BY BETH GERACI, SENIOR EDITOR
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID V. GRIGG





According to the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, a 38-year-old landscaper was weeding a lawn near a chain link fence at a middle school in Davie, FL, when he was struck by lightning. Dazed, the man was taken to an area hospital. He was one of the lucky ones; he survived. Some aren't so fortunate.

superhero

According to the most recent Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) statistics, 13 landscaping-related fatalities were caused by electrocution in 2009. And it's just one example of how dangerous landscaping can be.

Whether they're mowing, tree trimming or sawing wood, landscapers can never be too careful in the field. Problem is, when workers are on the job, they don't always contemplate that. On-the-job accidents happen for many reasons, business owners and consultants say, not the least of which are carelessness, ignorance and machismo.

For workers to work safely in the field, they need more than just thorough safety training. A quality company safety policy is meaningless without strict enforcement and continual worker oversight. » »


David Grigg

According to Texas' www.starlocalnews.com, a landscaper was mowing a lawn in McKinney, TX when his hand somehow touched the lawnmower blade. The blade was still active. The accident severed several of the landscaper's fingers and he was rushed to a local hospital.

Dangers of yard work

Such accidents are common in the landscape industry, as Eastern Land Management president Bruce Moore knows. The top injuries the company sees are cuts from mowers and back injuries due to heavy lifting, he says.

"We've seen guys putting their hands under a mower deck," Moore says. "You never know why some people do what they do. We had one guy trying to adjust the belts that drive the blades while the machine was running and he lost part of his finger with that."

David Estrada is AAA Landscape's

new safety director. He started on the job in June. A hands-on leader, Estrada spends 80% of his time in the field, making the rounds.

The company has a training room, where safety leaders show presentations on safety before taking new employees out in the field for hands-on training.

"If they can't operate the major equipment like weeders, chainsaws or blowers, they don't get hired," Estrada says. Presentations cover everything from fire extinguishers to scorpion protection, and the company even has a separate defensive driving program.

Vehicle accidents common

AAA has "zero tolerance of cell phone use while driving," Estrada says, "because we've had several vehicle accidents," including a recent incident in which an employee was talking on his cell phone, opened the door, hit it on a mailbox and smashed the window.

Moore's Eastern Land Management, Stamford, CT, recently was awarded an Overall Safety Achievement Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). The award recognizes ELM's commitment to providing safe work environments for its workers.

ELM and other companies were evaluated on overall number of accidents, number of days that employees were away from work, and reported injuries and illnesses, as well as the quality of its safety programs.

Increased safety "is something we've worked hard on," Moore says. "I'm very proud of the award."

To improve driver safety, in January *continued on page 30*

MAKING THE SAFETY GRADE IN MANUFACTURING

Randy Reinke is president of Custom Products, a manufacturer of cabs and rollbars based in Litchfield, MN. The company sells cabs and rollbars to vehicle manufacturers such as Toro and Bobcat and to landscape and tractor dealers.

Reinke's been building cabs since 1963 and rollover protection since 1971.

Custom Products operates a 130,000-square-foot facility featuring a test lab where the company tests its designs before certifying them.

"The safety really has to be pushed starting with the manufacturer," Reinke says. "Then it's important that the safety message comes all the way down — to the dealer, then the purchaser. It's important that the safety message comes all

the way down through the distribution channel."

Some employers may forget that it's actually an OSHA legal requirement to provide a safe workplace for employees.

"Why do you do it?" asks Reinke. "You want to avoid injury and you also want to avoid liability. The end goal is protecting that person — that human being at the end of the line. Safety saves lives."

Cary Zielinsky, president of Rider Tailgate Accessories, is a forest engineer who does timber work for the State of Utah.

He recently developed new truck accessories called Tailgate Cable Extension Links. The links make loading and unloading landscape equipment safer and easier, Zielinsky says, because they decrease a loading ramp's steepness.

"I had the idea quite a few years ago," he says. "I had an ATV, and the steep angle of the loading ramps on the tailgate wasn't good." As a result it was difficult to load heavy equipment, which often slid down the ramp, he explains.

The steel links can pull about 4,700 pounds.

"Anyone who has to load on ramps knows going backwards throws the weight a little bit," Zielinsky says. He adds that Rider links reduce ramp steepness by about 16% and allow a tailgate to be lowered past 90 degrees. As a result, low ground clearance equipment such as riding mowers do not get stuck on the tailgate edge.

"For me it was all about the safety," Zielinsky says. "If it's less steep, you're less likely to lose traction going up the ramps."



A mower is loaded into a pickup truck with the help of Tailgate Cable Extension Links. The links lower the tailgate by 5.3 inches.

PHOTO COURTESY: CARY ZIELINSKY

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continued from page 28

ELM installed GPS units on all of its vehicles and receives a weekly report of the speed limit at which employees are traveling.

Because its trucks travel the highway daily, ELM sets the limit at 60 miles per hour. Every Friday, ELM receives a spreadsheet showing which vehicles exceeded 60 mph. Once a driver exceeds 65 mph he or she receives a written warning and repeat violators are fired after their third infraction.

OSHA statistics indicate that 20 landscape workers died in highway accidents in 2009; and Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010 preliminary data states transportation accidents in all industries declined from 2009-2010 yet still accounted for nearly two out of every five work-related deaths.

Like AAA, Green Lawn Fertilizing forbids its employees to use cell phones while driving, says Vice President of Operations Tom Knopsnyder. "You're driving a 9,000-pound vehicle on the road," he says. "We're driving through residential neighborhoods. We're aware of the risks. We take it very seriously."

Also, last July, Green Lawn began providing chains to restrain equipment in its trucks. The chains are installed by a mechanic before any truck goes out in the field.

"It's a 2,000-pound machine," says Knopsnyder. Obviously, you know what can happen if that machine falls off and hurts somebody."

Like ELM, Knopsnyder is proud to say that Green Lawn received a safety award from PLANET last year for having no road-related accidents. "We didn't hit a parked car or hit a mailbox off the side of the road," he says.

Heat a factor

At AAA, based in Phoenix, temperatures often rise to 118 degrees, so employees can become overheated.

According to OSHA preliminary statistics, more than 30 workers died in 2010 from heat-related illnesses. In June of this year, the administration launched a campaign to educate land-



Staying hydrated on hot days helps prevent injury and lost productivity.

"WE HAD A COUPLE NEW EMPLOYEES GET INJURED BECAUSE THEY WEREN'T USED TO WORKING IN THE SUN. THEY'RE NOT USED TO WORKING OUTSIDE IN 100 DEGREES FOR 8 HOURS, AND BY THE END OF THE DAY THEY GET CONFUSED AND DIZZY AND THAT'S WHEN WE HAVE ACCIDENTS."

— DAVID ESTRADA
AAA LANDSCAPE, SAFETY DIRECTOR

scapers about the risks of working in the heat. The campaign reminds workers that they need "water, rest and shade," according to OSHA's website.

AAA has a heat illness prevention plan showing employees how to recognize and treat heat stroke and heat exhaustion symptoms. When workers suffer a heat-related illness, they are required to do exactly what OSHA suggests — go to shade and loosen clothing. Their fellow workers are told to fan them and put an ice pack under their armpits and on their legs.

On each job site, AAA also provides an ice machine, water, electrolyte powder and salt tablets. If employees do not get better, they are driven home.

Chemical risks

Speaking of risks, Knopsnyder says working with chemicals and heavy equipment can be extremely dangerous, and that's why safety is among the company's top five priorities.

At Green Lawn, the guys doing the fertilizer applications have the most dangerous job. That's why Green Lawn provides them with rubber gloves, rubber boots, safety glasses and long-sleeved shirts. In the four years Knopsnyder's worked at Green Lawn, a worker's never suffered a chemical burn.

Because working with fertilizers can be dangerous, Green Lawn audits its workers and watches them apply chemicals in the field, showing them what they did right and what they did wrong.

"If it's a major violation they'll be terminated on the spot," says Knopsnyder.

Knopsnyder wishes more companies would take applying fertilizers seriously and train employees properly. More companies need to be well versed on rules and regulations, he says. But unfortunately, "if you have a truck and a spreader, you can start a lawncare company."

continued on page 32