



## Landscape - General Safety

Always focus on working safely, follow all company safety policies and safety rules and ensure that you do not place yourself or others at risk of injury. Landscape and lawn maintenance work involves the use of a variety of gas-powered equipment, machinery and tools. It is important that they are operated safely and maintained in safe working condition, as this equipment can be quite dangerous when used improperly or not properly maintained. To reduce the potential for accidents and injuries, you must first read and follow the manufacturer's equipment operator's manual including all safety precautions, warnings, and safe use instructions. Pay special attention to any and all warning labels you see on the equipment.

### Training

Never operate a piece of equipment that you have not been formally trained on by your company supervisor or manager and all training should be documented. If you have not been trained on the equipment or if you have any questions regarding safe operation of the equipment, do not use the equipment and ask your supervisor for assistance. You must complete documented ladder safety training before you can work from any type of ladder. Watch our brief ladder safety use video at [ffvamutual.com/safety/safety-videos/](http://ffvamutual.com/safety/safety-videos/).

### Landscaping/Lawn Care

When you think of landscaping, dangerous working conditions probably aren't the first thing that comes to mind. While it's true that landscapers don't usually face some of the more deadly construction hazards, they are still exposed to hazards that can cause serious injuries and lasting health problems. Here's a brief look at some of those hazards.

### Motor Vehicles and Equipment

- Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of fatal accidents among landscapers. This includes traffic accidents (frequent travel from job to job means more time on the road) and struck-by incidents.
- Planning before the job begins and controlling traffic during the job, such as through the use of a flagger, can increase safety.
- While on the job, all landscaping employees should wear high-visibility colors to increase their chances of being seen by drivers.
- Encourage employees to practice safe driving at all times and consider holding a toolbox talk.
- Place safety cones around the vehicle and trailer to create safe work area and to notify vehicular traffic of the work zone. Place cones on all sides exposed to traffic and provide ample space to operate mowers and equipment inside cones with room to walk in while getting out of vehicle/walking to trailer.
- In addition to motor vehicles, landscapers have to avoid cuts, buried electrical lines, and sprains and strains and even amputations, while working with powered equipment and other sharp tools.

### Tips to prevent injuries:

- Stay aware at all times. Workers must focus on both the job and what's going on around them. Getting distracted around dangerous equipment or getting tunnel vision on the task at hand can be equally dangerous. No listening devices during work. Stop your equipment to talk with anyone. Be especially aware around traffic areas.

### Tips (continued)

- Keep tools sharp. Dull blades require more force to get the job done, increasing risk for repetitive stress injuries, cuts and amputations.
- Know your equipment. Blowers, mowers and other power tools can cause severe injuries if they are used incorrectly. Train employees in the safe use of any equipment they will be expected to use.
- Power ALL the way down. Ensure all blades have stopped moving completely and tools are de-energized before attempting maintenance on equipment.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE). You must wear appropriate PPE including wrap-around safety glasses, hearing protection, and heavy-duty work boots with slip-resistant soles. If operation creates excessive nuisance dust, consider wearing a N95 dust mask. If work creates excessive flying gravel or debris, you should wear a full face shield and eye protection. Face shields do not replace the need for eye protection.
- Wear appropriate attire including long pants that are free of holes or tears, long sleeve shirt, and consider wearing gloves to protect hands from flying debris and environmental hazards. Do not wear loose-fitting clothing. You should always wear a high-visibility safety vest or hi-visibility colored shirts.

### Pesticides and other Health Hazards

- Landscapers face several health hazards on a daily basis. Noise exposure, which is also common in construction, can be addressed through the use of hearing protection. But other hazards are more unique to the landscaping industry, such as exposure to pesticides.
- Pesticides enter the body by mouth, through the skin and eyes or as vapors inhaled into the lungs. The long pants, sturdy shoes, gloves and eye protection that many landscapers wear every day helps protect from exposure to chemicals found in lawn care products, solvents, fill dirt and soil.
- Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers can cause a wide variety of health effects depending on the product, individual and level of exposure. Chronic, low-level exposure or a single acute exposure may cause allergic reactions, sensitivity to pesticides or occupational asthma.
- No matter what chemical is being used, review all Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and follow instructions on the label when using hazardous materials. Use recommended hazard controls including appropriate PPE.

### Exposure to Heat, Sun and Infectious Diseases

- With all of their work occurring outdoors, it's no surprise that landscapers also face many environmental hazards. Long hours in the sun can cause heat stress and raise the risk for skin cancer.
- Make sure you are well hydrated before you start work by drinking plenty of water and taking frequent breaks, especially during the summer months. All vehicles should have ample supply of cold water and drinking cups for each worker. Do not share cups or drink from the cooler. Apply sunscreen to body parts exposed to the sun and reapply as needed.
- Spending time around plants, tall grasses and standing water also puts landscapers at increased risk for contact with biting and stinging insects and other animals. The infectious diseases carried by some of these pests mean they must be treated not as a nuisance, but as a serious hazard. Be familiar with potential environmental hazards including poisonous and venomous wildlife, how to identify them, and how to avoid contact with environmental hazards. Never place your hand or body in any brush or vegetation without first taking precautions to ensure that it is safe.