

### Before you begin:

- Familiarize yourself with the types of powered equipment used at your facility.
- Review the safety manuals for all powered equipment and hand tools in use.
- Review reports from past near misses and accidents.
- Review the facility's hazardous communication manual for SDS of any chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.



### Introduction

Landscaping and mowing is a daily job, depending on the location and climate. Workers' exposure to equipment, materials, and people is a year-round issue.

Safe work practices, habits, and personal awareness help to avoid injuries both on and off the job. Personnel must remain aware of site and home safety.

### Definitions

**Approved/certified operators** – An operator the employer has approved and trained to ride or walk behind power equipment. Examples of this equipment could be, forklift truck, skid steer, service truck with a powered dump, post hole digger, etc.

**Defective Equipment** - A piece of equipment or tool that is unsafe and should not be used. A good example is a frayed cord with bent plugs, or equipment or tools without the proper guarding.

## Discussion

### Equipment

1. There are various types of equipment used in the landscape mowing business to complete a job task. Both riding and walk behind mowers must be operated by trained and experienced operators.
2. Pre-check all equipment before using. Mower operators must be aware of terrain and slopes. Have experienced operators assist and train new employees on the safety issues with each type of equipment. These work practices apply to off the job safety awareness as well.
3. Inspect all hand tools, both manual and powered prior to use. Look for frayed cords and other defects. Follow the site safe operating procedures (SOP) for removing tools and equipment out of service. If you have a question, comment, or a concern about a particular type of equipment or tool ask before use.
4. To reduce ergonomic injuries, choose tools that fit your hand properly and allow you to work with a firm and straight grip.

### Materials

1. There are many types of materials used in the landscaping-mowing business. These include decorative rock, sand, large boulders, and treatment chemicals like weed killers and fertilizers. Each presents its own material handling hazards. Employees must be trained in the use of these materials before handling them. Train all employees to review the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) prior to using any hazardous materials.
2. Many landscaping materials are bulky, heavy, or large. Before manually moving equipment, material, or product, see if mechanical assistance is available. Carts, dollies, wheelbarrows, and skid steers are great pieces of equipment to reduce the risk of injury caused by manually moving material. If safety concerns arise, they should be reviewed with the supervisor prior to conducting a task.

### People

1. Personal and site safety awareness accountability is one of the most important things on a job site. A safety orientation for new employees is a must. Train temporary and summer help and monitor their work. Encourage employees to intervene if they see an unsafe act. A more experienced worker should work with a new employee.
2. Employees should be aware of the SOP for incident and injury reporting to the appropriate supervisor. Emergency action plans both onsite and off are a must. Designate individual(s) trained in CPR/first aid and ensure all employees know the designated person.
3. Ensure that required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is available. Examples include:
  - Work boots.
  - Safety glasses.
  - Face Shields.
  - Earmuffs.
  - Gloves.
  - Clothing (high visibility).
  - Layered clothing.
  - Long sleeve shirts.
4. Ensure all personnel stay hydrated when working in hot environments and new personnel become acclimated to working in extreme temperatures.

## Conclusion

Ensuring equipment is inspected prior to use and employees are properly trained to inspect and use equipment and materials is key to preventing injuries for landscaping personnel. Workers must understand if they see something wrong, they need to report it.

## Group Activity

- Have attendees perform a safety check of powered hand tools. Check power cord integrity/wear and tear.
- Have equipment operators complete a safety review of the equipment they operate.
- Ask members of the group for one example of safety job knowledge used to complete a work task safely.
- Ask experienced staff to share personal experiences at the meeting to reinforce the presentation.

## Resources

[OSHA Topic Page for Landscaping and Horticultural Services](#)

[Ohio State University Extension - Pesticide Safety Education Program](#)

[Kansas State University Research and Extension – Mowing and Trimming Safety](#)



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