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MORE EFFECTIVE SAFETY
TRAINING?

Here are some effective and low-cost ways to keep productivity up while enhancing worker safety and health.

3 HOW COMMON ATTITUDES AFFECT SAFETY

Everyday attitudes affect how workers think about safety. Heed these tips from an expert at the U. of Florida, Gainesville.

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Working outdoors mean protecting yourself from the sun. Know the different forms of skin cancer and how to prevent this disease.

THE ONE-STOP SOURCE FOR GREEN INDUSTRY SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Keys to an Effective Safety Training Program



by Sam Steel, Ed.D.
National Safety Council

During the turfgrass growing season when productivity is a priority, safety may take a back seat at many lawn care firms. Don't let this happen. An increase in personal injury and property damage claims could skyrocket your insurance premiums. There are effective, low-cost ways to keep productivity up without sacrificing worker safety and health. Here are some suggestions for effective safety training programs for your workers.

- Make sure that you are recruiting and training **competent** workers to operate equipment. This means employees who possess the skills, knowledge, maturity and experience to do the job safely and efficiently. *How do you recognize competent workers?* Have them demonstrate their level of proficiency in operating the equipment. If they can't meet certain basic criteria, take them off of the equipment until further training has improved their proficiency to an acceptable level. It's important not to criticize them for this lack of skill. It simply means that they need additional training for their own safety and the safety of their fellow crew members.

- Keep in mind that **demonstration** and **hands-on** training is much better than any lecture method. Meaningful interaction between trainers and students usually translates into a higher level of retention of the important safety and health information being presented. *How do you conduct this type of training?* There are many examples including demonstrating personal

protective equipment (PPE) with workers for the prevention of occupational hearing loss and eye injuries. Bring hearing protection to the training session in the form of ear muffs and ear plugs. Have the workers try them to determine their preferences just as they would ANSI-approved protective eyewear. Extra safety decals, such as those placed on equipment by the manufacturers, can be passed out among the workers. Then have the workers show their crew manager and fellow employees where those decals can be found and then discuss their critical safety messages with the entire crew.

- Keep the training **site specific**. This means training that is targeted directly at the hazards which the workers will be exposed to at horticultural worksites. *How can you focus the training on site-specific hazards?* Do some pre-planning for all worksites and develop a site-specific Hazard Identification Form that could be completed by your job estimators. For commercial lawn care work, you should include the location of slopes, water-retention areas, exposed sewer covers, severe drop-offs, such as retaining walls and areas where people, buildings or vehicles could be exposed to flying debris during mowing operations.

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Use the **resources** of your insurer, as well as your trade and/or safety organizations to enhance the quality and effectiveness of your employee's safety training. Many insurance companies will provide resources including personnel who will work with your managers to increase the impact of quality safety training for your business. Horticultural trade associations and safety organizations are also good resources for safety training, including CD-rom-based and tailgate training materials. Other resources include equipment manufacturers. They have an abundance of training resources as well.

- Maintain complete **documentation** of your workers' training sessions. Don't get in the bind of conducting effective employee training without the recordkeeping to back it up.

How should you document your training sessions? Have each trainer ensure that all students have participated, then have them sign and date each training sheet

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immediately upon completion. Keep the original documentation in a safe place so that inspectors have back-up when requested.

- Once you have your safety training resources all lined up, don't forget the all-important **management commitment**. This applies to everything from setting a good safety example for your employees to following through on an on-going safety training initiative for your business.

Other ideas to show your enthusiasm for safety training includes forming safety teams within your organization and providing safety incentives. These extra measures will go a long way to show employees that you practice what you preach.

For more safety information, along with safety training resources, go to the National Ag Safety Database Web site at www.cdc.gov/nasd.

To contact Sam Steel, call the National Safety Council at 800-621-7615.

CHECKLIST

- Recruit and train competent workers. Have them demonstrate their level of skill in operating work-place equipment.
- Keep in mind that demonstration and hands-on training are much better than a lecture method.
- Keep training site-specific. Target training directly at the hazards which workers will be exposed to at horticultural worksites.
- Use your available resources. That means your insurance company, equipment manufacturer, horticultural trade organization or safety organization. Consider CD-rom and tailgate training programs.
- Don't forget management commitment. Setting a good example goes a long way toward helping your employees.

Watch for Signs and Symptoms of Lyme Disease

Workers in landscaping are more prone to Lyme disease, which accounts for more than 90 percent of vector-borne disease cases in the United States, according to Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium carried in the gut of certain ticks. The ticks attach to the human body and transmit this bacterium to its host. Although many people with Lyme disease develop a "bull's-eye" rash, 20-40 percent of people who have the disease don't. Other symptoms include fever, lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, fatigue, headache,

migrating joint aches or muscle aches. Diagnosis is based on a blood test, and most cases can be treated with antibiotics.

To prevent Lyme disease, workers need to carefully check their bodies for ticks. If you see a tick, remove it with a tweezers, and clean the skin with an antiseptic. Wear light-colored clothing to more easily see ticks. Wear long-sleeved shirts, and tuck pants into boots. Use appropriate insect repellants. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a national Lyme disease risk map that identifies the low-risk and high-risk areas in the U.S. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov.

Hazardous Attitudes About Safety and Health in Horticulture



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Everyday attitudes affect how managers and workers think about safety. Workers may have certain attitudes about safety but not even recognize these underlying feelings. Here are some common attitudes that could affect your workers and how they perform their job.

- **"It can't happen to me."**

This is the feeling of invulnerability and is the belief that things always happen to someone else, therefore, "it can't happen to me." To confront this attitude, managers should

find ways to help workers identify with the hazardous situation to "personalize the risk." One example is to find a person in the community or industry who was injured to illustrate what happened. Perhaps that person can explain to your workers how the injury occurred and ways to prevent a similar incident in the future. The more localized you can make the material, the better. It's a way of personalizing the risk, which is necessary for behavioral change.

- **"Don't tell me what I can't do."** This is the anti-authority attitude where workers with this attitude feel that rules are for other people and not for them. And they will break the rules whenever they feel they can get away with it. Explain to anti-authoritarians that rules are not arbitrary; they are designed to prevent people from being injured or killed.

- **"I'll do it this way and do it now."** This is an impulsive attitude where people take immediate action without stopping to think about what they are doing. They think in terms of doing something—anything—and doing it quickly. It's

important to help impulsive people focus on the consequences of hasty action and the need to pause and think before acting.

- **"I can do it by myself and don't need any help."** This is an over-confident attitude where people are over-confident in their capabilities and don't think they

"Try to find a person in the community or in your industry who was injured. Ask that person to speak with your employees about how they were injured and ways to prevent a future incident."

have any limitations. This is the worker who consistently takes unnecessary chances feeling that they can get away with it. People must realize that taking these unnecessary chances is foolish.

- **"I can't do anything about it anyway."**

This is the resignation attitude or the thought that "what's the use" and feeling helpless and unable to cope. This person will simply give up and not feel like taking a proactive role in their safety.

- **"That would take too much time."** This is the feeling of being in a hurry and not wanting to take the time to use the safer approach or taking the time to fix something in order to do the job safer.

- **"I didn't see it until it was too late."** By not paying attention to the task at hand, a person will not have time to react to a situation that may occur.

- **"My co-worker or boss told me to do something; so it must be safe."** Not every employee (or employer) can think of all risks involved with a task. Tell employees to use their gut instinct. If they feel a task

is unsafe, encourage them to speak up immediately. Employees and employers should work together to make all tasks safe for everyone.

This material is excerpted from *The "Hort" Module - Awareness of Risks and Attitudes Towards Safety and Health in Horticulture* at www.flagsafe.ufl.edu. More safety information can be found at the National Ag Safety Database Web site at www.cdc.gov/nasd. You can reach Carol Lehtola at clehtola@ufl.edu.

Four Ways to a Better Safety Checklist

When trying to correct a safety hazard, workers and managers should provide a safety checklist. For a checklist to be useful and effective, it should require more information than just a checkmark. Here are four items that every checklist should have:

- Identify the problem or the hazard.
 - Identify the corrective measure.
- Identify who is responsible for seeing that it gets done.
- Identify a target date for completing the correction.

It could include additional information, such as costs, where to obtain the items for correction, etc. But the above four items are essential.

Know the Facts About Skin Cancer

Outdoor workers exposed to the sun's ultraviolet radiation include horticultural workers, gardeners, landscapers and greenskeepers. Ultraviolet radiation can influence the skin's normal growth and appearance. Damage can result in sunburn, increased rate of aging of the skin, and ultimately skin cancer. While some workers might enjoy working in the great outdoors, they need to take the appropriate safeguards. Here are some skin cancer facts and ways to protect workers, courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

Reduce exposure to sunlight

Workers should avoid unnecessary exposure to the sun, especially between 11:00 a.m. and 4 p.m. during the summer. If possible, plan outdoor work for early morning or late afternoon, and work in the shade. Use an umbrella for additional protection.

Wear protective clothing and sunglasses

Use wide-brimmed hats and clothes made from close-knit fabric to protect from ultraviolet radiation. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants may be hot to wear in the summer, but they will protect workers

from the sun. White cotton T-shirts will be cooler to wear than a denim shirt. Also, wear sunglasses that absorb UVA and UVB radiation.

Use sunscreen on exposed skin

Workers should liberally apply protective sunscreen on exposed skin and then reapply according to the manufacturer's instructions (usually every two hours). Manufacturers label sunscreens with a sun-protection factor (SPF). The greater the number, the greater the protection. SPF 15 sunscreen may absorb more than 92 percent of the UVB radiation while SPF 40 may absorb 97.5 percent of UVB radiation.

Examine skin regularly for suspicious spots

People who work under the sun should examine their skin regularly for any unusual changes. The danger signs include any wound, sore or patch of skin that won't heal or constantly scales.

Also take notice of any growing lump, particularly if brown or bluish in color. Most skin cancer occurs in areas of skin most heavily exposed to sunlight (ears, forehead, arms, etc.). There are three

different types of skin cancer linked to sunlight exposure: basal cell cancer, squamous cell cancer and malignant melanoma.

Basal cell cancer is the most common and appears as a raised, hard, red or red-gray pearly wound and is often found on the forehead, eyelids, cheeks, nose and lips. It typically does not spread and can usually be easily treated and cured.

Squamous cell cancer are blemishes that develop into rough, scaly patches with small areas of open wound that do not heal. If caught early, this type of cancer can be removed and cured.

Malignant melanoma is more rare but is the most serious form of skin cancer. A mole or pigment spot begins to bleed, grow or change in color, shape or texture. It usually spreads if not treated in the early stages. If treatment is delayed, it is often fatal.

To protect yourself, it's important to get medical care for anything that looks suspicious rather than wait until the problem becomes untreatable.

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