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PRACTICES

Summer is a great time to review safety practices to avoid an inspection. Our OSHA expert explains some frequently cited standards and ways to cut your risk.

3 PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS

DURING THE SUMMERTIME

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Know the Landscape When It Comes to Summer Safe Practices

As summer shifts into high gear, it's a good time for employers in the landscape industry to conduct an internal review of safety practices and to provide employees periodic "tailgate training" to minimize the chance of injury or an OSHA citation. Why? For several years, OSHA has viewed the landscape sector, which includes landscape contracting services, lawn care, and ornamental tree planting industries, to be a high hazard industry on its targeted list. This year, at least one OSHA region has implemented an inspection program targeting the landscape industry. Here's an overview of the injury and inspection statistics, along with steps to limit safety hazards.

Just the Facts: Injury and Inspection Numbers

As you may know, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is responsible for promulgating safety standards. However, states are allowed to maintain their own safety and health programs if their regulations are at least as protective as the OSHA standard. Currently 19 states run their own safety programs. Thus, these "state-plan" standards may be more stringent than the ones discussed here.

Despite OSHA's focus on the landscape industry, the good news is that the number of OSHA-recordable injuries and illnesses has been trending downward in the broader category of landscape and horticultural services over the past 10 years. Specifically, the total OSHA recordable injury case rate decreased from 10.7 injuries per 100 employees in 1993 to around 7.0 in 2001. In 2003, the last year for which data is available, and which reflects OSHA's new recordkeeping rules, the recordable case rate was 5.2.



by Timothy J. Bartl, Esq.
McGuinness, Norris & Williams

The rate of workdays lost to injuries has also decreased from 5.6 in 1993 to 3.8 in 2001, and landed at 3.1 in 2003, after the new recordkeeping rule took effect. The most prevalent causes of injuries were contact with other objects and overexertion.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics data on the number of reported injuries annually provides good insight into where employers ought to focus their injury prevention efforts. OSHA data from 2002 shows that just over 50 percent of all reported injuries involved employees who worked less than 12 months. It reemphasizes the importance of early employment training.

The most frequently reported injury types were sprains and strains (40 percent); cuts and punctures (13 percent); and fractures (11 percent). The body parts most affected were the back and lower extremities. When the injury involved time off from work, it usually required 1-5 days away from work.

The Most Frequently Cited Standards and Their Requirements

In fiscal year 2004, the most frequently cited general industry standards in the landscape industry include hazard communication, personal protective equipment, and the general duty clause. Under the construction standard, gas welding and cutting was frequently cited for landscapers. Here are these standards and the general requirements that apply to each.

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Summer Safe Practices

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Hazard Communication

Across the landscape industry, employers are most frequently cited for failure to have a hazard communication program.

OSHA's hazard communication standard requires employers to have a written hazard communication program that: (1) includes a list all of the hazardous chemicals used by work crews in the field and at headquarters; (2) provides for the collection and maintenance of material safety data sheets (MSDS), which describe the hazardous aspects of the chemical, the health and physical effects of contact with the chemical, and first aid; and (3) ensures that new employees are trained in the dangers of chemicals in the workplace, and additional training is provided each time a new hazardous chemical is introduced.

Under the HazCom standard, employers are not required to send a book of MSDS with each work crew. MSDSs can be kept in a single location, provided that in an emergency, the information can be relayed immediately via telephone to assist in first aid.

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Personal Protective Equipment

Employers are responsible for ensuring that employees are protected against hazards such as heavy objects falling on workers' feet (safety boots); flying particles (eye protection); falling objects (head protection); fumes and fertilizer chemicals (respiratory protection); and the effects of temperature and chemical solvents used in irrigation projects on the hands (hand protection).

The employer is responsible for ensuring that the protection used eliminates or reduces the hazard to an acceptable level, including when the employee provides his or her own protective equipment.

General Duty Clause

This requires all employers to identify and address recognized hazards in their workplaces that may cause serious injury or death, even if no standard applies. Because work conditions can vary from customer to customer, OSHA commonly cites employers under the general duty clause if they knew about or should have known about the hazard. Some common injuries cited under the general duty clause include:

Slips, Trips and Falls

Landscape surfaces are often uneven, muddy and slippery, and workers often move too quickly for the terrain. For this reason, it's not surprising that sprains and strains are the top reported injury in the industry.

Employees need appropriate shoes, and the workplace needs to be free of tripping hazards. Store tools in their proper place. The Professional Landcare Network offers more tips; see <http://planetfile.objectwareinc.com/pdfs/PLANETSafetyTips1april05.pdf>.

Lifting

Landscaping can involve a great deal of lifting of plant material. Employees should be instructed about safe lifting techniques, including lifting in pairs. Mechanical devices can be used to limit strains and other injuries associated with lifting.

Hand Tools

Hand tools should be in good working order with grips that are not broken or cracked. Consider providing employees with gloves designed to reduce vibration, which can lead to considerable discomfort and productivity loss. Make sure all hand tools have the proper guards to avoid flying debris.

Weather-Related Injuries

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are preventable illnesses and are discussed more on page 3 of this newsletter. Employers should ensure that workers have appropriate clothing and head protection geared to limit sun exposure and that they drink a sufficient quantity of water. OSHA has a useful two-sided card on heat illness in both English and Spanish. See <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/landscaping/solutions.html#heatcold>.

Gas Welding and Cutting

Landscape work that involves irrigation or hardscape activities usually involves gas welding and cutting. OSHA's gas welding and cutting standard sets the criteria for storage, use, and transportation of gas cylinders used in welding. It goes without saying that the equipment should be maintained in good working order, but routine inspection and tailgate training helps to reduce the chance of an accident or injury from improper handling.

Summer is the bread-and-butter for most landscapers. With a little care, it can be an injury-free period as well.

Visit OSHA's landscape and horticultural services website at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/landscaping/solutions.html>. ANLA's members-only website also offers more safety and health information.

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Sun Safety: Prevent Worker Heat Illness

When the sun sizzles on a hot summer day, heat illness can be an unexpected concern for horticultural workers. High air temperatures and humidity put workers at special risk of heat illness, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Worker compensation claims for heat illness among seasonal agricultural workers are among the highest of any occupation, according to the University of California Berkeley.

Heat exhaustion and heat stroke result when the body is subjected to more heat than it can handle. The good news is that you can recognize the early symptoms of heat illness and take steps to avoid it altogether. Here are some facts about the sun's effects on your workers' health.

Heat exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body can no longer keep blood flowing to supply vital organs and at the same time send blood to the skin to reduce body temperature. Signs of heat exhaustion include weakness, difficulty continuing work, headache, breathlessness, nausea or vomiting, and feeling faint or actually fainting.

What to do

If you think someone is suffering from heat exhaustion, have the person:

- Rest in a cool place
- Drink cool water
- Loosen clothing, and remove unnecessary clothing
- Shower or sponge the person with cool water

It takes at least 30 minutes to cool the body down once a worker suffers heat exhaustion. If not treated promptly, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke—a medical emergency.

Heat stroke

Heat stroke occurs when the body can no longer cool itself, and body temperature rises to critical levels. Signs include confusion, irrational behavior, loss of consciousness, convulsions, lack of sweating, hot, dry skin, and abnormally high body temperature.

“Educate workers on the causes of heat illness and ways to treat it. A ready means of cooling should always be available where heat illness might occur.”

What to do

If you think someone is suffering from heat stroke, take these steps:

- Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number
- Provide immediate, aggressive, general cooling
- Immerse the person in a tub of cool water, or spray with cool water from a hose
- Wrap the person in cool, wet sheets and fan rapidly
- Transport the person to the nearest hospital
- Don't give anything by mouth to an unconscious person

Safety Precautions: What Can Managers Do?

To help prevent heat illness among your workers, here are some tips from the University of California Berkeley.

Replace fluids

Workers need to drink plenty of fluids in the heat. Simply relying on feeling thirsty will not ensure adequate hydration. People

typically require about one-half to one cup of water every 20 minutes of the workday. Water at 55°F is preferable to ice water or warm water.

Limit exposure time

Schedule as many strenuous work activities as practical for the coolest part of the day (early morning or late afternoon). Employ additional help. Also minimize heat exposure by taking advantage of natural or mechanical ventilation.

Encourage rest breaks

Be sure workers rest at frequent intervals, preferably in a cool environment sheltered from direct sunlight. Anyone experiencing extreme heat

discomfort should rest immediately.

Wear loose-fitting clothing that is permeable to air

Less clothing is generally desirable in hot environments, except when the air temperature is greater than 95°F or a person is standing next to a radiant heat source. Then covering exposed skin is beneficial to reducing heat stress.

Use a buddy system

Having someone else around is always helpful. However, it depends on a fellow worker's ability to spot the early signs of heat stress, such as irritability, confusion or clumsiness. A ready means of cooling should be available at work areas where heat illness might occur.

Educate workers

Any horticultural worker who is exposed to hot work environments should receive basic instruction on the causes, recognition and prevention of the various heat illnesses.

[For additional information and to order the EPA/OSHA's *A Guide to Heat Stress in Agriculture*, call \(202\) 512-1800.](#)

[Quantity discounts apply.](#)

Nursery Crop Program Undergoes Dramatic Changes

by John M. Hodapp, CPCU, Senior Vice
President, Agency Operations, Hortica
Insurance

The Federal Nursery Crop Insurance program for the 2006 crop year (which begins on October 1, 2005) has undergone substantial changes. Here is a summary of the most significant changes:

- The nursery policy is no longer a "continuous" contract. Unless the proper documents are signed by September 1, 2005 and the necessary forms are filed promptly, current nursery crop policyholders could experience a dangerous gap in coverage.
- Policies that become effective on October 1, 2005 will expire on May 31, 2006. Going forward, the renewal date for all nursery crop policies will be June 1. The short-term policies issued in 2005 will have their premiums adjusted according to monthly proration factors.
- New policies, subject to a 30-day waiting period, will be available year round.
- Liners as defined by the policy are now insurable.
- Additional plant types have been added. Here is a listing of all plant types:

Field Grown Plant Types

Deciduous Trees (shade and flower)
Broad-Leaf Evergreen Trees
Coniferous Evergreen Trees
Fruit and Nut Trees
Deciduous Shrubs
Broad-leaf Evergreen Shrubs
Coniferous Evergreen Shrubs
Small Fruits
Herbaceous Perennials
Roses
Ground Covers and Vines
Annuals
Foliage
Other plant types listed in the Special Provisions

Containerized Plant Types

Deciduous Trees (shade and flower)
Broad-Leaf Evergreen Trees
Coniferous Evergreen Trees
Fruit and Nut Trees
Deciduous Shrubs
Broad-leaf Evergreen Shrubs
Coniferous Evergreen Shrubs
Small Fruits
Herbaceous Perennials
Roses
Ground Covers and Vines
Annuals
Foliage
Palms and Cycads (New)
Liners (New)
Other plant types listed in the Special Provisions

- For the first time, growers may choose to insure one or both practices (containerized or field grown). Growers that opt for Buy-Up coverage may also select different coverage levels (i.e. 50%, 55%, 60%, 65%, 70% or 75%) for each plant type.

- The Nursery Crop Program has always been designed for producers of nursery material. The definition of a nursery has been revised to clarify that only businesses that grow (and not just distribute) the nursery plants are eligible for coverage.

Along with increased flexibility comes additional complexity. For example, growers will be asked to provide their inventory values for both containerized and field grown plants by "plant type." The Eligible Plant List and Plant Price Schedule (EPLPPS) software available on RMA's website (www.rma.usda.gov) will assist growers with this task. More than ever, growers should seek the advice of nursery crop experts to help guide them through these changes. Doing so will ensure that they receive maximum benefit from the enhanced programs now available to nursery growers.

For more info, call Hortica at 800-851-7740
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