INFORMATIONAL BROCHURE
EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Subject: Grounds Maintenance Safety

Although it only seems to apply in our climate for about 8 months, grounds maintenance activities can be rather intense depending in the size of the physical plant and potentially hazardous considering the types of equipment used. This brochure will summarize some of the ways to prevent accidents when involved in this work.

Again, like other work activities in the district, there are three elements to an accident prevention program in grounds maintenance: equipment, work activity, and personnel. The first two are relatively easy to manage; the third requires a little more attention. As for the equipment, we are going to assume several factors here for purposes of this briefing – you buy the best equipment you can afford, you select the right equipment for the task, and you maintain the equipment according to manufacturer's recommendations. Also, you do not release anyone to operate a piece of equipment without thorough training and observation of equipment operation – there is no compromise here even if someone tells you they know how to do it, check them out!

An important part of your occupational safety program effort is established job procedures. There are certain ways jobs/tasks should be performed in order to (1) work safe, (2) get the desired results, and (3) complete task in most efficient, and timely manner. Each worker needs to know what the accepted SOP are for particular work assignment. Allow no deviations unless it has been authorized by supervisory management who has the necessary experience and knowledge of specific activity. Shortcuts here can get people hurt. Employees need to know that if job site conditions change, which jeopardizes their safety, they can stop the work until necessary safeties are in place or conditions improve. As part of accepted job procedures is the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Not all hazards can be engineered out of grounds maintenance or power tools used in these tasks; and, recall, the employer has obligation to provide the appropriate equipment. Basic PPE for most grounds maintenance work includes: safety helmet (especially if trimming trees), safety eyewear (just about any job), chip shield (trimmers and chain saws), splash shield (chemicals – pesticides/herbicides), hearing protection (just about all power tools are in excess of the 85 dB threshold), gloves (just about all work involving hand tools or handling materials/cuttings), ballistic nylon chaps (chain saws), cotton clothing (better in the heat and to protect skin from sun and flying debris), and good footwear (usually means work boots). Make sure all safety equipment is in good condition and will provide the measure of protection.

The most challenging part of this process is the people element. It is critically important to continue education of all workers and to monitor their performance in the field. It is necessary if work patterns and behaviors are not acceptable, that you take correction action to maintain safe work environment for everyone. For employee well-being, you need to know the affects of poisonous plants, insect stings, hot and cold weather stresses, work activity physiology (work/rest cycles, overtime), and emergency response.

Lots of stuff here but important. Be safe and take the time to do it right.