

# North Dakota State University

## Lawn Safety

### **I. Introduction**

NDSU provides guidelines for general grounds safety for all campuses of the University. The intent is to establish proper safety procedures and practices, as well as to promote and provide for a safer environment for students, faculty and staff.

### **II. Purpose**

To reduce the risk of a work related injury or death by maximizing personal safety while using lawn care equipment.

### **III. Goals**

To ensure all employees know and understand the safe operating procedures and guidelines involved with lawn care safety.

### **IV. Procedures**

Gardening tools and mechanical lawn care devices such as lawn mowers, power blowers, and chain saws, present special safety concerns when used improperly.

#### **A. Common Landscaping Accidents**

1. Cuts, lacerations or amputations from whirling mower blades
2. Bruises or broken bones from flying projectiles
3. Burns from hot equipment parts
4. Electrical shock from faulty grounding or defective electrical cords
5. Eye injuries
6. Back strain from improper equipment usage
7. Slips, trips and falls

#### **B. Basic guidelines to ensure optimum safety**

1. Read the equipment owner's manual
2. Use the right equipment for the job at hand
3. Inspect the equipment before each use
4. Know how to control and stop the equipment quickly
5. Wear personal protection equipment, as necessary and required
6. Wear eye and hearing protection as required if needed
7. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes and work gloves
8. Apply sunscreen to exposed areas of skin
9. Avoid fatigue and heat stress
10. Drink plenty of water and take breaks
11. Do not operate powered equipment if you are tired, sick, or taking medication
12. Take special precautions when working with electrical equipment. If you are using an extension cord, take care not to accidentally cut the cord.
13. Do not smoke around gas-powered equipment. Allow hot equipment to cool before refueling
14. Make sure that all guards are in place and in good condition

15. **No horseplay** allowed
  16. Maintain equipment and keep in good repair
  17. Lock-out/Tagout equipment while out of service and in need of repair
  18. While filling portable fuel cans, remove from the vehicle and place cans on ground surface
  19. Keep pedestrians and bystanders at least 30 feet away when using powered equipment
  20. Be aware of your surroundings at all times
- C. Hand Tools
1. Keep hand tools in good condition. Replace split or rotten handles. Keep blades sharp.
  2. Use tools that fit your needs and your build. For example, if you are tall, choose tools with handles that are long enough to prevent you from stooping over your work.
  3. Never leave a rake, shovel, or hoe on the ground facing up. Foot injuries and/or head injuries can occur from handles that pop up unexpectedly.
- D. Mower Safety
1. To avoid injury with power mower equipment, you must pay close attention to your surroundings.
  2. Conduct a pre-mowing inspection of the lawn and remove any debris, rocks, limbs, or other items that could become a projectile. Look for concealed hazards such as holes.
  3. Keep hands and feet away from moving blades.
  4. Fill the tank with gas before beginning work (By filling the tank initially, you can avoid having to fill the tank later when it is hot.)
  5. Shut off the engine before unclogging, servicing, or adjusting the mower, and before removing the grass bag.
- E. Riding Lawn Mowers
1. Before starting the engine, make sure the transmission is out of gear and the mower blade clutch is disengaged.
  2. Never allow extra riders on the lawn mower.
  3. Slow down when turning and when working on slopes. Mow up and down slopes rather than across them.
  4. Always look behind you before backing.
  5. If you hit a large rock or stump, stop the mower and inspect the blades and shaft. Replace damaged blades.
  6. Never leave a running lawn mower unattended. Before leaving the seat, park the mower on a flat area, disengage the mower blades, and remove the ignition key.
- F. Walk-Behind Mowers
1. Wear sturdy shoes with good traction. Never wear sandals around walk-behind mowers.
  2. Do not bypass the safety device that stops the blade when the operator releases his/her grip on the handle.
  3. Mow across slopes rather than up and down slopes.
  4. Work slowly and patiently when mowing tall grass or tough weeds. Forcing the mower may cause repeated clogs and engine stalls.

5. Never leave a running mower unattended. If you stop momentarily, cut the throttle to idle and make sure the mower will not roll away.

#### G. Chain Saw Safety

1. Complete training and have documentation before using a chain saw.
2. Stay alert while sawing. Most injuries occur below the waist when the operator is not paying attention.
3. Do not use a chain saw alone. Have someone else stand nearby in case of an emergency.
4. Choose and inspect your chain saw carefully
5. Use the correct size chain saw for the job at hand.
6. Ensure that the chain is sharp and the tension is taut.
7. Ensure that smaller chain saws have a safety tip to prevent kickbacks. (Kickbacks cause one third of all chain saw injuries.)
8. Wear a hard hat to protect you from falling limbs.
9. Wear leg chaps, gloves and eye protection.
10. Always operate a chain saw with two hands.
11. Limbs that are at shoulder height or higher present a special safety problem. Use a ladder so the saw is at a lower and safer position relative to your body.
12. Never allow the tip of a running chain saw to touch the ground. This could cause a serious kickback injury.
13. To avoid kickback injuries, stand to the side of a running chain saw. Do not stand directly behind it.
14. Move brush and limbs as you work to maintain a clear operating area.
15. Never force a chain saw through a limb.
16. Never stand on a log or limb while cutting it.

#### H. Power Blowers

1. Always walk towards your work when using a power leaf blower. Do not back away from your work.
2. Be aware of pedestrians or others in the area.
3. Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes and long pants.

#### I. Trimming Equipment

1. Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes and long pants.
2. Avoid touching rocks, debris, and gravel with trimming equipment. These items could cause a serious injury if a kickback occurs.
3. Make sure all screws and chains are tight. Vibrating equipment can cause screws to loosen.
4. Walk towards your work. Do not back away from your work when using a trimmer.
5. If using electric trimmers, keep extension cords clear of blades.