

Risk Manager

Answers, resources and information to help assess and reduce risk

Grounds Crew Safety Training – with an Added Benefit By Dennis Kane

School district grounds crews are breaking out equipment put in storage months ago, preparing to do the first grass cutting and flower bed mulching of the season.

To reduce the risk of employee injuries, train employees on the proper use of power equipment, such as chain saws, weed whackers, lawn mowers, leaf blowers and hedge trimmers. Training should be specific to the equipment being used and include the following, often overlooked areas:

- Ensure employee's know where fuel, i.e. gas, for the power equipment is stored (if inside a building -preferably in an approved flammable liquids storage cabinet or an approved metal container with a self closing lid).
- Stress the importance of not working on a piece of equipment unless authorized (a custodian who has minimal mowing responsibility should not be trying to repair a chain saw or changing, or sharpening, a blade on a lawn mower).
- Employees should know what personal protective equipment is required for the job.
- When providing personal protective equipment offer a selection to encourage proper fit and provide training on proper use.
- Instruct employees to never remove or override a safety device on power equipment (i.e. removing the blade control lever on a lawn

mower, the grass chute/deflector on a weed whacker or lawn mower, or defeating the brake on a chain saw). In addition, instruct employees to report any missing or broken safety devices to their supervisor immediately.

Now, the added benefit! Take advantage of the fact that your grounds crew may see locations on the property that are seldom seen by others and are seeing the property from a different perspective. Instruct employees to report sink holes, broken tree limbs, bee hives, missing or broken gutters, broken glass, broken sidewalk sections or heavily eroded areas. These items, as well as others, should be reported so they can be repaired in a timely manner. Turn your grounds crew into an exterior inspection team!

Countless injuries are caused by lack of knowledge and inadequate, or non-existent, training. Train employees on the proper use of equipment and personal protective devices. Appropriate, documented, training of your grounds crew will help reduce the risk of employee injury and potential property damage.

For additional information or training on best practices and safety management within your school entity, please contact Director of Risk Management Sharon Orr at (866) 401-6600, ext. 7152 or sorr@cmregent.com.