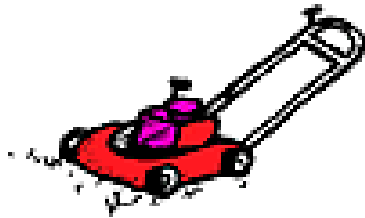


March Ground Safety

IT'S ALMOST TIME TO GET THAT YARD IN SHAPE. I KNOW YOU WANT TO GET A HEAD START ON THE NEIGHBORS IN ORDER TO WIN THE PRESTIGIOUS "YARD OF THE MONTH" AWARD!! BUT, LET'S BE SAFE OUT THERE



Here are a few safety tips to remember each time you prepare for lawn work:

Before starting the task, putting on the proper clothing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is essential. **A long sleeved shirt, long pants, heavy work boots preferably with steel toes, gloves, safety glasses and hearing protection are minimum clothing requirements for basic lawn care such as mowing, trimming and edging.**

The power lawn mower is one of the most dangerous tools around the home. Each year, approximately 68,000 persons (**DON'T BE ONE OF THEM**) with injuries caused by power mowers were treated in emergency departments. More than 9,000 of the people hurt were younger than 18 years. Older children and adolescents were most often hurt while cutting lawns as chores or as a way to earn money. **(I wish my kids would cut the grass)**

Lawn mower injuries include deep cuts, loss of fingers and toes, broken and dislocated bones, burns, and eye and other injuries. Some injuries are very serious. Both users of mowers and those who are nearby can be hurt.

- Only use a power mower with a control that stops the mower if the handle is let go. This control should never be disconnected.
- Do not allow children younger than 14 to use ride-on mowers. Do not allow children younger than 12 to use walk-behind mowers. Even if old enough, supervise your child.
- Make sure that sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) are worn while mowing.
- Prevent injuries from flying objects, such as stones or toys, by picking up objects from the lawn before mowing begins. Use a collection bag for grass clippings or a plate that covers the opening

March Ground Safety

where cut grass is released. **Have anyone who uses a mower wear protective eyewear.**

- While the lawn is being mowed, keep others away to ensure their safety.
- Start and refuel mowers outdoors, not in a garage or shed. Mowers should be refueled with the motor turned off and cool.
- Make sure that blade settings (to set the wheel height or dislodge debris) are done by an adult, with the mower off and the **spark plug removed or disconnected.**

Use proper bending and lifting techniques. Remember to bend and lift with the knees, not the back.

Warm up. Cumulative injuries, such as tennis elbow or tendinitis occur when people overextend themselves on a job they tackle only once or twice a year. Stretch your upper-body muscles before heading outside. For overwhelming tasks, enlist help from family members, take frequent breaks, spread the job across several days or hire professional help. Also, pulling weeds can result in pain

If you are using a pesticide or a herbicide, follow the directions very closely. Pesticides and herbicides can cause a health threat if misused.

Tools for lawn care are not toys. Inform children of the hazards. If training an older child to operate these tools, supervise him or her closely.

Learn to identify poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. These plants can produce a severe allergic reaction.

Watch for bee hives, wasp nests and other stinging insects.

Beware of sharp blades and edges on mowers and hand tools. Wear gloves when handling sharp objects.

Don't point the blower nozzle of a leaf blower toward people or pets. Use a dust mask in a dusty or dirty environment.

Wear earplugs when using noisy equipment, such as leaf blowers or wood chippers.

March Ground Safety

Protect your eyes with safety glasses while gardening or doing yard work

Those plants you love to hate are back.

That means an arsenal of weed whackers, trimmers and lawn mowers soon will be hauled out to do battle with the green invaders.

What likely won't be included is protective eyewear.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology warns that yard work can be hazardous to eyes. Unprotected eyes are vulnerable to rocks and debris that can fly into your face, causing everything from a scratched cornea to loss of an eye.

Dr. Steven Chen, an ophthalmologist with Barnet-Dulaney-Perkins Eye Centers in Phoenix, Ariz., says weed whackers are especially dangerous.

"People who use them without safety glasses frequently come in with foreign objects in their eyes," Chen says.

One of the worst accidents he's seen involved a man whose lawn-mower blade broke on a rock and a piece of the blade hit him in the face, severing an eyelid muscle.

Safety glasses also are recommended for day-to-day gardening and pruning chores. Dirt in the eye can cause a bacterial infection, and tree sap can be toxic.

Chen says fungal infections, like the kind you might get from contact with a bush, are particularly nasty.

"They're slow-growing and difficult to eradicate even with antifungal medication," Chen says.

Inexpensive but effective safety glasses may be purchased at most garden centers for as little as \$3 to \$4, according to Chen.

Study: Cell phones 'blind' drivers

WASHINGTON-- Drivers who use a cellular telephone, even with a "hands-free" device, suffer from a kind of tunnel vision that endangers themselves and others, U.S. researchers said on Monday.

Legislation that seeks to make mobile telephone use by drivers safer by mandating the use of a hands-free device may be providing a false sense of security, they warned.

March Ground Safety

New York is the only U.S. state that requires the use of the devices for mobile telephone conversations while driving, but 30 others have been considering similar laws, as has the Canadian province of Newfoundland.

"Sometimes you have to actually do the silly study that shows the obvious," David Strayer, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Utah, who led the study, said in a telephone interview.

Driving simulator used

Strayer, whose team has done a series of studies on cell phone use while driving, set up a driving simulator and put 20 volunteers in it. Sometimes they used a cell phone and sometimes they did not. Their reaction time, driving style and performance were monitored. Writing in the March issue of the Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, Strayer's group said use of a cell phone clearly distracted the drivers. The finding adds to a series of similar studies - most notably a 1997 New England Journal of Medicine report that found talking on a phone while driving quadrupled the risk of accident. "People, when on a cell phone compared to when they weren't, overall their reactions were slower," Strayer said. "They got into more rear-end collisions. They just kind of had a sluggish style that was unresponsive to unpredictable events like a car breaking down in front of them, a light changing and things like that." There was no difference, Strayer said, between using a hands-free or a hand-held cell phone.

Impaired either way

"You were impaired in both cases," he said. "That suggests to us that whatever legislation may be put into place saying you can do one but not the other ... might send the wrong message and give people a false sense of security." Perhaps even more disturbing, Strayer said, was the finding that the volunteers did not realize they were driving badly. "We asked people afterward how they felt they performed and they usually felt they performed without impairment and, in some cases, thought they drove better when on the cell phones," Strayer said. "It is like studies that show 90 percent of people think they are better-than-average drivers. Forty percent of them are wrong."

Strayer wanted to know why talking on a cell phone had such a profound effect on drivers, so his team set up a second experiment. "We used an eye tracker -- a really precise device that allows us to see where someone is looking," he said. They found that while the drivers looked at objects, in this case billboards, if they had been talking on a cell phone at the time they could not remember having seen them. "There is a kind of a tunnel vision -- you aren't processing the peripheral information as well," Strayer said. "Even though your eyes are looking right at something, when you are on the cell phone, you are not as likely to see it." This included road signs, other vehicles and traffic lights. "This is a variant of something called inattention blindness," Strayer said. Tests showed this kind of inattention did not affect drivers who were listening to music, to audio books or talking with a passenger in the car.

V/R

CAP-USAF Safety Dude