

Job Safety for the Professional Landscape Employee

VIDEO SCRIPT

INTRODUCTION TO SAFETY ISSUES This beautifully maintained landscape is no accident. Professional work like this requires attention to every detail of design, plant selection, installation, maintenance and SAFETY. Just one accident not only can interfere with individual day-to-day productivity but also impact company profitability and employment opportunities. Accidents and injuries can prevent you and your co-workers from earning maximum wages, benefits and promotions, or even special incentive packages. Lost time due to an accident hurts you, your family, your co-workers and your company.

THE SOLUTION IS PREVENTION As with most problems, however, the solution is prevention.

EMPLOYEE DRESS Dressing for success in the landscape industry means selecting clothing that is appropriate and safe for the job. Many professional landscaping companies require uniforms for employees. Not only does a uniform present a professional image for you and your company, but the uniform also improves your safety in the jobs you are required to perform. Whether you wear a uniform or select your own work clothes, remember these get-ready-for-a-safe-workday tips:

- Choose fitted, comfortable garments instead of loose or oversized clothing. Such garments, though fashionable, could become dangerously entangled in equipment, trees or shrubs.
- Choose a long or short sleeved shirt, preferably with a collar, instead of a tank top. Not only is a tank top too loose-fitting for safety, it also exposes skin to dangerous sunburn.
- Wear professional work shoes. Athletic shoes may be America's most popular foot attire, but soft-soled shoes are dangerous for a landscape professional. Select a comfortable, hard-soled, non-skid work shoe with a leather upper.
- Leave jewelry safely at home. Jewelry of any kind can be a hazard on the job site. And, you don't want to risk losing a valuable possession.
- Keep hair out of danger. Some companies require close-cropped hair as a condition of employment. This is not a fashion statement but a safety precaution. Long hair can become painfully entangled in equipment. That hurts! Beards can prevent special face protection such as goggles or masks from fitting properly. Neatly trimmed hair is also an aspect of your professional appearance. If your hair is long, protect both your hair and yourself by containing it in a way acceptable to your employer and yourself.

UNIFORMS If your company provides a uniform, many of these safety and image decisions are settled for you. Safety-conscious decisions mean you arrive at work ready for a productive day.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT According to your specific job assignment, you may be issued certain safety equipment for use during the work day. Federal and state safety regulations require eye and ear protection in certain work situations. Your company is required to provide such protection, but you must take responsibility for actual use.

Wear ear protection while using all power equipment. Add eye protection when using power weeding and edging equipment. Some companies require protective chaps and other special safety equipment for using chain saws. A hard hat may be a requirement for a job on or near a construction site. Leather gloves, provided by many employers, are a must for any job requiring the use of sharp cutting tools like pruners.

LOADING Loading equipment for use on the job site can be a real strain. Back injuries are the most common ailment of the landscape professional, so learn to lift with your legs, not your back, and work in teams.

SECURING EQUIPMENT Be sure all equipment is secure with bungees or other tie-down straps before moving a loaded vehicle. Walk all the way around a trailer to make sure the area is clear of equipment and people and to check trailer hitch and lights. Some companies require the placement of safety cones at every stop. Retrieving these cones ensures a complete vehicle walk around and can prevent a real disaster.

TRAVEL Travel to a job site can be one of the most hazardous parts of your day. If you are assigned to drive your crew and its equipment to the job site, remember, you are accepting responsibility for the safety of both your passengers and your company's equipment. That's why many companies have stringent requirements for employees who operate company vehicles. It isn't possible for you and your crew to be productive wage earners if you don't make it to the job site safely. Avoid distractions while driving and focus on the safety of your passengers and other drivers.

SAFETY RESTRAINTS All passengers in both the cab and the bed of the truck should be secured in legal safety restraints.

COURTESY Because you are representing your company, courtesy to other drivers and to pedestrians is a must.

PARKING When you arrive at the job site, park your vehicle in a safe location that does not block vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Chock wheels according to your company's regulations. Be sure to chock on the downhill and set all brakes.

UNLOADING Unload equipment with the same attention to safety that you practiced during loading. Secure all bungees and tie downs before leaving vehicle. Locking cables keeps equipment secure while on the job site. Your foreman should check all security measures.

FUELING Fueling equipment can be extremely hazardous. Place equipment to be fueled on a level, safe surface, never on grass. A fuel spill in grass is difficult to contain and is very dangerous. Fuel spilled on grass or other plants can damage the very landscape you are hired to manage.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT Many companies use a special combustible fuel container approved by the Occupational Safety and Hazards Administration, or OSHA, for extra safety. Use of such specially-designed safety equipment is an investment that may result in lower insurance premiums for the company and greater safety for its employees. Whatever model fuel can you use, be sure it does not leak and that you use a funnel. Report any fuel safety problems to your supervisor,

SURFACES Check trailer and truck surfaces before unloading equipment. Wet surfaces or oil spills can cause hazardous footing.

EQUIPMENT USE Safe equipment use is a must on the job to prevent injury to people and damage to equipment. Be sure you know how to use all equipment assigned to you. Follow printed or oral instructions for equipment use. Before doing any work on the piece of power equipment, turn off the equipment and unhook spark plug wires.

MOVING VEHICLES The safety of pedestrians and other drivers on the job site is essential. When moving your vehicle from location to location on a job site, be aware of all vehicular and pedestrian traffic. A flagman can be a helpful safety assistant. Some vehicles are equipped with a back up alarm to warn pedestrians.

STREET SMARTS Practice special safety when working near streets or other traffic areas. Work facing the traffic and always wear a safety vest.

PESTICIDE USE The mixing and application of pesticides in the landscape requires special training. Safety is a must. Be sure to follow your supervisor's instructions when handling and applying pesticides. Every pesticide application is unique and requires specific safety methods and equipment, or even special clothing. Be sure and follow label directions and your supervisor's instructions.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS All landscape companies are required to maintain Material Safety Data Sheets at every job site for all pesticides and fuels. This information may be life saving in order to secure appropriate emergency medical attention.

RELOADING Preparing to leave the job site requires safely reloading and securing all equipment. Remember to lift with your legs, not your back, and work as a team.

STORAGE When you arrive at the storage facility, remove all clutter and trash from the truck bed. Trash underfoot isn't just a nuisance, it's downright dangerous. Check surfaces for moisture or spills.

Properly storing all equipment and tools keeps hazards out of others' way and makes it easier to start another productive and safe workday.

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE A drug-free workplace is essential for the safety and productivity of all employees. Your company will provide information on specific policies. Many companies participate in the Georgia Certified Drug-free Workplace program, both for the safety of employees and to receive insurance discounts.

INSURANCE Your company's insurance costs are directly related to its safety record. Your company may experience a job site spot inspection at any time from its insurance provider. Safety violations can cost your company in downtime, employee medical expenses and higher insurance premiums and may result in fewer employment opportunities. Your attention to safety not only helps protect your employment but also provides opportunities for others.

BENEFITS Attention to safety is a primary concern of every landscape professional. Safer companies are more profitable, provide better wages and benefits and greater opportunities for employment. That's why some of the most successful companies have established safety incentive programs to encourage this very important factor in the success of individual employees and the company.

DOING YOUR PART Doing your part for safety not only protects your company and your co-workers, it also protects you and your future. And that's truly beautiful!

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