

Safety Note # 150

GRASS-SHEARING SAFETY



Picture Courtesy of
Sierra Foothill REC

Data available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate most manual lawn trimmer or edger injuries that received hospital treatment, during 2008, were lacerations to fingers. In addition to physical injuries, there are the potential for ergonomic injuries associated with repetitive hand-squeezing and stooping and bending motions frequently utilized when using grass shears. Many of these injuries are avoidable and are due to employee inexperience or lack of training or improper or inattentive use of grass shears. California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 3203 (7) requires employees to be trained on the equipment they use in the work place.

Grass-Shearing Safety Precautions

- Before using, always inspect grass-shearing tools to determine if they are functioning properly, including assuring all moveable joints are lubricated and blades are sharpened adequately. For electric grass-shearing equipment, inspect the batteries, power cord, and/or casing for damage. In addition, assure the on/off switch is functioning properly.
- If the grass shear fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the grass shear from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and closed-toed shoes. Use eye protection, when appropriate.
- Maintain a safe working distance from other workers when using grass-shearing tools.
- Carefully inspect the work area to locate any physical hazards, such as material, debris, or animal hazards, such as bees and wasps.
- Keep focused on the grass-shearing task and always know the location of your hands and fingers. Always turn off a power grass shear before looking up.
- Always carry grass-shearing tools with the sharp end pointed down.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and drink adequate fluids to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration.
- Before changing or adjusting the blade(s) of a power grass shear, disconnect the battery or power source.
- Do not use dull bladed tools and never touch the blade of a grass shear.
- When available and appropriate, use tool extenders.
- Do not clean power grass shears with water and do not use power grass shears in wet conditions.
- Take frequent breaks when performing repetitive tasks. Do not overtire yourself.
- Avoid shearing grass in a stooped or bent over position for lengthy periods of time. If prolonged stooping or bending is unavoidable, then regularly interrupt the stooped or bent over posture by standing upright and successively bending backwards several times.