

MAFES Dawg Tracks



March 10, 2008 *General Safety Tips to Start for Spring*



Spring will soon be upon us. With it comes cleaning, planting and other work chores that we haven't done in several months. The best way to avoid injuries is to eliminate the hazards and get everyone in a safety conscious mode.

We all know that no matter how we train and practice good safety habits, inherently an accident or incident can happen. There are some steps that we can take for added help or protection from unknown hazards. Many of these have been discussed before, but it never hurts to rehash them and joggle our minds to a new spring safety consciousness.

We should start with **Personal Protective Equipment** as a means for extra protection against the elements:

- Eye Protection – We should use goggles or a face shield when using power tools in the shop, yard appliances like leaf blowers, brush trimmers, etc.
- Sunglasses – We should use sunglasses when we are working in direct sunlight.
- Sunscreen – Use a high SPF factor even when it is a cloudy day.
- Face shield – We should use face shields when using chippers, power saws, and etc.
- Hearing protection – Anytime we are using power equipment or working in any noisy environment, we should wear good hear protection.
- Respirators – Any time that we are painting, spraying pesticides or welding, we should have respirator protection.
- Footwear – If you are working around heavy equipment or lifting heavy objects, you should consider steel-toed shoes or boots.
- Hardhats – When trimming orchard or other trees, consider wearing a hardhat for protection.
- Insulated gloves – When using brush cutters or other vibrating equipment, insulated gloves will help to offset some of the shock.

TOOLS:

We should always select the tool that is the most appropriate for the job that we are going to perform.

- Use tools with ergonomic features that will help in protecting you.
- Check all tools before each use for damage or defects.
- Replace or repair damaged handles.
- Keep all your cutting tools sharp.
- Replace tools to their normal place in the shop.

SHOVELING & DIGGING:

If you start a shoveling or digging project in an unknown area, you should call the utility company to come out and identify the areas so that you won't be cutting utility, TV or other electrical power lines or cables.

When you choose a shovel, be sure to get one that is right for the job. For example, use a 3 lb. shovel for handling snow and a 6.5 lb. shovel for handling dirt or gravel. It is important from an ergonomic standpoint for the length of the shovel handle to fit your height. For an example: A garden shovel should be between elbow and chest height and a snow shovel (which we have little to worry about in Mississippi) should come up to chest height.

REFUELING EQUIPMENT:

Refueling equipment is repetitious in all of our situations, but certain care should be used while doing this, and the folks doing this job need to be trained and take extra care in doing so. The following tips should be practiced in any refueling situation:

- Always shut off the engine and let it cool down.
- When removing the fuel cap, do so slowly and in a half-locked position to allow the pressure to release.
- Allow the nozzle to empty by keeping it in the filler opening for several seconds after shutting off the fuel flow.
- Replace the fuel cap after checking to see that the vent isn't clogged.
- Always store fuel in UL and FM approved Type II safety cans.
- Keep fire extinguishers or other appropriate firefighting equipment close by.
- Do not smoke or allow smoking in the area where refueling is done or where portable gas cans are stored.
- If you have an overflow or spill on equipment in the process of refueling, wipe up the residue and allow to fully dry before restarting the engine.
- In the event that your clothing catches fire, do not run. Stop, drop to the ground and roll. If a fellow worker catches fire, use a blanket or cloth to wrap and smother the flame or get a fire extinguisher.

As mentioned above, one might think that these tips are elemental, but when we think that we have all the answers and the old adage of "it can't happen to us" sets in, then that's when "Murphy's Law" intervenes. It might not, but it probably will. **SO BE CAREFUL!**