



Pruning Safety

Fact: When it comes to protecting yourself from lacerations, hands are the most important as over 40 percent of hand injuries are lacerations.

A business owner is responsible for safety so your emphasis on this topic and communication regarding its importance will help prevent your workers from getting injured.

The two main causes of lacerations are machinery and hand tools. Machinery (26 percent of machinery injuries are lacerations) is often specialized for your industry and therefore the best protection is safety gloves. When it comes to hand tools, a full 55 percent of injuries cause lacerations. Gloves can help but look for innovative cutting tools designed for safety as they can drastically reduce injuries.

Plant, tree and vine pruning is a necessary part of many agricultural-related operations. Pruning your vines may seem like a simple task, but pruners need to be aware of the safety issues and hazards associated with pruning activities. Before pruning begins, workers should receive training in pruning hazards, safe pruning techniques, safe tool handling, ladder safety and the proper personal protection to be worn.

Pre-Pruning Activities

Pruning typically involves the use of shears, saws, loppers and manual and electric trimmers. Use caution, as pruning tools have sharp edges and pinch points and, in some cases, may represent an electrical hazard.

You should thoroughly review and understand information from the pruning tool operations manual provided by the manufacturer, with specific attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.

Before using, always inspect pruning tools to determine if they are functioning properly, ensuring all moveable joints are lubricated and blades are sharpened. For electric equipment, inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.

Personal Protection Equipment

The staff performing pruning duties should be dressed for protection. Personal protective equipment (PPE) like protective eyewear, gloves, headwear, shoes, long-sleeved shirts and pants help shield workers from many pruning hazards. Workers should be appropriately dressed for the day's weather conditions with light-colored, thin clothing for the hot days and warmer layers for cold or wet days. And for all outdoor work, adequate sunscreen and a wide-brimmed hat provides protection against the sun's harmful UV rays.

One hazard of pruning is from the branches or foliage removed during the pruning process. As many pruning activities require workers to get in close to the plant or tree to see where to make the best cut, an eye could be poked or cut by a ricocheting branch, flying debris or sharp twig. Therefore, eye protection, such as safety glasses or face shields, is an essential part of pruning equipment. To protect against other cuts and scrapes, workers should wear long-sleeved shirts, neck scarves and long pants. In some cases, a dust mask may be necessary to prevent inhaling airborne particles during the cutting, grinding, or sawing of limbs and foliage. Workers are also advised to wear hard hats when the job warrants it and sturdy or steel toed shoes to protect against falling limbs and debris.

Hazards of Cutting Tools

Hazards around pruning is from the cutting tools required to do the job. Tools include pruning knives and saws, anvils, scissor shears, manual and electric hedge shears, branch loppers, pole pruners and power saws. These tools have common hazards—sharp blades and pinching points. Workers can protect themselves from cutting injuries by practicing safe tool handling techniques, maintaining and storing tools properly and wearing protective gloves. Well-fitting gloves can also provide a better tool grip and prevent blisters, cuts or puncture wounds.

Hazards of Working at Heights

Because pruners often work at heights, they should be trained in ladder safety, including proper climbing techniques, ladder placement and ladder maintenance. Shoes with good tread provide traction for climbing. Pruners that work at elevated heights should also note the location and height of electrical lines and avoid touching them with foliage, pruning equipment, or lift equipment.

Extra Safety Tips for Pruners

Extra safety tips for pruners include using proper lifting techniques, avoiding awkward postures, using ear plugs working around power tools, drinking plenty of liquids to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration, taking short, frequent breaks from repetitive tasks and stretching before, during and after work. Sometimes bees, wasps, snakes and ticks may be encountered while pruning, so workers should carefully observe areas for signs of insects or reptiles and either avoid those areas or take extra care while working in those locations. Lastly, maintaining good health and overall strength can reduce injuries from the physical labor of pruning.



For More Information:



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