Pressure Washing Meeting Kit



Pressure Washer Safety

A pressure washer is a power tool that sprays water at high pressures to clean large, sturdy surfaces such as buildings, farm equipment and roads.

While the pressure of the water can be considered the biggest exposure to risk during this work task, there are certainly many more hazards to be considered.

RISKS OF PRESSURE WASHING

The strong spray from a pressure washer can cause serious wounds that might first appear minor. Wounds that appear minor can cause a person to delay treatment, increasing risk for infection, disability or amputation.

The fast, strong spray can throw objects that strike and injure others who are close by.

Electric shock can occur if the pressure washer is not used properly and if safety instructions are not followed.

Workers should not use any equipment powered by gasoline engines inside buildings or other partially enclosed spaces unless the gasoline engine can be placed outdoors and away from air intakes.

HAZARDS AND INJURIES CAUSED BY PRESSURE WASHERS

Some of the injuries that cleaning technicians can suffer while using pressure washers include:

- Penetration wounds from thrown glass fragments, rocks, and other debris
- Abrasions
- Infections such as tetanus
- Eye injuries
- Injection injuries caused when cleaning chemicals penetrate the skin
- Slip-and-fall injuries occurring on flat surfaces
- Electrocution injuries
- Falls from height when use of a pressure washer on a ladder or scaffolding causes a worker to lose balance

MORE HAZARDS INFORMATION

Long-term use of these pressure washers can cause hearing loss. Use of gas pressure washers in enclosed spaces lead to the buildup of carbon monoxide and result in asphyxiation.

A significant danger for workers is the innocuous appearance of some of these injuries when they first occur. But a penetration wound, for example, can result in an infection, which in turn can lead to eventual disability or even amputation.

PRESSURE PRECAUTIONS FOR WORKERS

- Never point a pressure washer at yourself or others.
- Never attempt to push or move objects with spray from the washer.
- Never use a gasoline powered washer in an enclosed space.
- Always test the ground fault circuit interrupter (circuit breaker or outlet) before using a pressure washer.
- Always plug a properly grounded pressure washer into a properly grounded receptacle.
- Wear rubber-soled shoes that provide some insulation when using the pressure washer.
- Never cut or splice the pressure washer’s power cord or extension cords.
- Never remove the grounding prong from the pressure washer’s power cord plug or the extension cord.
- Always have a qualified electrician check the pressure washer for electrical problems after it has tripped a circuit breaker.
- Never allow children to operate a pressure washer. Keep children at a safe distance when an adult is using a pressure washer.

WORKERS CAN REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF PRESSURE WASHER INJURIES

Those who use pressure washers as part of their work duties understand their power. But when people use a tool every day, they can grow complacent and even careless. Workers can minimize the possibility of injury by taking these steps:

- Don’t depress the trigger until you have pointed the nozzle at the thing you want to spray.
- When using an electrically-powered pressure washer, make sure that the power cord and any extension cord are not in standing water.
- If you have to operate a pressure washer on a ladder, lift, or scaffold, use a safety harness.
- Avoid the use of solid stream nozzles. Use a wide-angle or fan nozzle instead.
- Set up your work area where other people are not in the line of fire of the water stream or flying debris.
- Use a longer wand that makes it hard for the individual who is using the pressure washer to make contact with their own body.
- When using a pressure washer that is also supplied with heat, do not turn it all the way up. Using heat can be more effective to remove debris; however it also creates the opportunity for a burn.
- Maintain good housekeeping. Keep the area free of trip hazards. Remove excess mud to prevent slip injuries.
- Wear the proper PPE. Depending on what is being cleaned and the power of the pressure washer will dictate what exact PPE is needed. A good start is rain gear, safety toe boots, gloves, safety glasses, and face shield.
- Never use a pressure washer to spray off yourself or your boots.
- Never use zero tips. These tips are usually painted red. Choose a tip with a wider angle of spray to reduce the chance of a severe injury if the stream makes contact with the body.

FINAL WORD

Consider all of the risks of pressure washing and what steps you need to take to protect yourself and the others around you. While the main hazard considered is the pressure of the water, there are many more secondary hazards that could lead to the actual injury.