String Trimmers (Weed Whips) and Edgers – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

The dangers and hazards of string trimmers are often overlooked because string trimmers are so commonly used.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

String trimmers (weed whips) and edgers can cause injuries to the operator, co-workers or even bystanders. The common hazards include:

- Prolonged noise exposure causing hearing damage
- Muscle strain from holding equipment in an awkward position for long periods of time
- Fire and spills when refuelling
- Significant cuts and bruises
- High velocity projectiles that cause cuts and bruises including eye injuries.

Incident example

- A young worker got her hair sucked into the fan of a string trimmer while bending under a tree branch. The whip repeatedly banged into her head, causing serious injury.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Make sure you are familiar with the string trimmer and its safe use.
- Make sure you are alert – not fatigued or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE), including:
    - Steel-toe, non-slip footwear
    - Hearing protection
    - Safety eyewear or a face shield
- Wear full-length, close-fitting clothing and a hat.
- Check the worksite. Remove debris, look for holes, and check slopes and ground quality.
- Look to see if anyone else is in or around the work area. Never assume people will stay where you last saw them. Use extreme care when approaching blind corners, trees, or other visual obstacles.

On the Job

- Only work in daylight.
- Ensure good footing and balance while operating the string trimmer.
- Keep the cutter (string) guard in place.
- djust the harness and hand grips to suit your build and work positions.
- Use equipment at ground level only.
- Stop the motor before putting down the string trimmer, or if anyone enters the area.

Refuelling

- Refuel outdoors on the ground.
- Allow the engine to cool before refuelling.
- Extinguish all ignition sources (for example, cigarettes).
- Use only an approved gasoline container in good condition.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the fuel tank.
- If you spill fuel on your clothing, change immediately.
- Never overfill the tank.
- Replace cap and tighten securely.

Responsibilities of Employers

- Maintain and repair string trimmers and edgers.
- Train workers on the safe use of string trimmers and edgers before they start work.
- Demonstrate how to hold, use, adjust, and store the tools.
- Demonstrate how the safety features work (for example, guards, shields, and automatic releases), and instruct workers not to remove any of these features.
- Remind workers about the PPE they are required to wear.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

FINAL WORD

Employers and supervisory personnel must conduct on-site reviews of all string trimmer operations to ensure employees are performing operations in a safe and secure manner.