

SAFE WORK PRACTICES for GROUNDSKEEPERS

*Contra Costa County Schools Insurance Group
Workers' Compensation/Health & Safety Services & Health Benefits Program Provider*



**Be cautious of hazards
and heat illness.**

SAFETY AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL

As school groundskeepers, you work hard to keep grassy areas and play structures neat and safe for students. When you take care of your own health and safety at work, you avoid disruptions in your life and on school grounds, and can continue providing this important service to students.

Did You Know?

- Groundskeepers can suffer from chronic lower back pain, muscle strains, ligament and tendon injuries, spinal disc degeneration, shoulder injuries, and tennis elbow from repeated motions and heavy lifting.
- School groundskeepers spend a lot of time outdoors and in the sun. Workers who spend many hours outdoors under the sun are at risk of heat illness, which can lead to death. Exposure to the sun can also cause problems such as cataracts and skin cancer.

Keep yourself safe and healthy on the job by following the tips in this flyer on how to identify and avoid potential hazards.

SLIPS, TRIPS & FALLS

- Always use a ladder or footstool to reach for objects. Never use a box or cart. Ask for help if needed.
- When using a ladder, put the ladder on stable, dry surface. Make sure it is fully open and locked. Do not stand on the top two rungs of the ladder. Ask for ladder safety training.
- Wear shoes with non-skid soles.

CHEMICALS

- Make sure all chemicals you use are labeled and each has a Safety Data Sheet.
- If you put chemicals into a different container, label the new container.
- Bring clean clothes and shoes to change into at the end of the work shift so you do not bring any chemicals home. Wash your work clothes separately.

NOISE

- Wear ear muffs or ear plugs as needed when using power equipment.
- Make sure powered equipment is in good condition; this will help reduce noise.

POWER TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

- Check all equipment for loose, broken, or damaged parts before use. Immediately report any damaged equipment, such as frayed wires.
- Follow the manufacturers' instructions for proper maintenance and repair, and replace any equipment that is not safe.
- Inspect area for hazards. Remove sticks, bottles, hidden wires, posts and debris.
- Never operate gasoline or diesel powered equipment indoors; this prevents deadly levels of carbon monoxide from building up.
- Keep lawnmower blades sharp.
- Use tools with padded handles to minimize vibration.

ERGONOMIC

- When lifting, keep loads close to your body; bend at the knees and lift with your legs; keep your back straight; and do not twist.
- Use a dolly, cart, or hydraulic lift to move heavy objects such as bags of fertilizer or soil. Get help if the load is too heavy to lift. Do not rely on back belts.
- Store the heaviest items on shelves at waist height.
- Stand and do gentle stretches when possible.

HEAT & SUN

- Use wrap-around sunglasses with UVA/UVB protection to reduce risk of cataracts.
- Wear thin, light-colored long pants, long-sleeve shirt, and a hat.
- Use sunscreen even on body parts covered from the sun.
- Take rest breaks in the shade.
- Drink plenty of cool, potable water throughout the day.
- Watch for symptoms of heat illness.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

- Immediately turn off power if you smell burning plastic or smoke, see sparks, or feel tingling or a shock. Do not use the equipment. Report problem immediately.
- Follow steps for proper lock out/tag out when servicing equipment. Turn off and disconnect the equipment. Make sure power source has a lock or a tag.
- Make sure electrical connections are suitable for the type of tool being used and the working conditions (wet, dusty, flammable vapors).

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