

Lawn & Garden Safety Tips

Agricultural Engineering Extension: Karen Funkenbusch, Research Associate
Willard Downs, Extension Agricultural Engineer

Planning outdoor projects? Specialists from the Agricultural Engineering Rural Safety and Health Program encourage individuals to make safety a priority to avoid an unnecessary trip to the emergency room. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind:

Lawn and garden tools

- Before using any tool or appliance, read and follow the manufacturer's use and care instructions that come with the product.
- Pay attention to warning markings. When using tools or extension cords outside, make sure they are appropriate for outdoor use.
- Always look for the UL Listing Mark before purchasing an electric lawn/garden tool. The UL Mark on a product means that representative samples of that product have been tested to nationally recognized safety standards with regard to fire, electric shock and related safety hazards.
- Before each use, inspect your lawn and garden tools for frayed power cords or broken casings. If the product is damaged, don't use it and don't attempt to make repairs yourself. Return the product to the retailer or manufacturer if it is new or under warranty, or have a qualified repair shop examine the product.
- Never alter a product or remove safety features such as blade guards or plug grounding pins.
- Check the switch on your power tool or garden appliance to make sure it's "OFF" before you plug it in.

Ladders

- Different types of ladders have different safety considerations, check the manufacturer's instructions for guidelines before climbing. Pay close attention to all caution and danger labels.
- Use a ladder that is long enough for the job. While up on the ladder, don't overextend

your reach. Take the added time to move the ladder to a more convenient location.

- Make sure you place the ladder on a firm, level surface.
- Inspect the ladder for structural damage or deterioration before you climb.
- If using a stepladder, remember to lock the spreader before you climb, otherwise the ladder could fold with you on it.
- Never stand on a ladder's bucket shelf. Read and follow warning markings for highest standing level.
- Metal ladders conduct electricity. Watch out for overhead wires and power lines.

Lawn mowers

- If you have a gasoline-fueled mower, store the gas in a UL Listed safety container. Fill the mower outside, using a funnel to prevent spills. Stay away from possible ignition sources and replace gas cap firmly when done.
- Make sure all safety guards are in place and keep the mower's blades sharp. If you hit an object or have a mower malfunction, remember to turn off the mower and disconnect the power cord before inspecting for damage.
- Keep your hands and feet away from the mower's blades. Never reach under the mower for any reason while the mower is in operation.
- Safe footwear is important, especially with walk behind mowers. Make sure your shoes provide good traction to reduce slipping. Never work barefoot or in sandals.
- Never leave the mower unattended while running and don't allow young children or inexperienced people operate the mower.

For additional information, see MU Guide Sheets G1932 and G1959. Contact your local Outreach and Extension, or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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