

Safety Note #35

GRASS TRIMMER SAFETY



Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicate a total of approximately 10,000 people were treated in hospitals for grass trimmer injuries during 2003. Of this total, 3,100 injuries were to eyes and 2,200 injuries were lacerations. Other injuries included contusions, strains, and sprains. Most grass trimmer injuries are avoidable and are due to operator inexperience or inattentive or improper handling of grass trimmers. **Video E-082 Groundskeeping Safety is available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the grass trimmer operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the grass trimmer for damage or disrepair and make sure the cutting head and shield are securely in place. For electric grass trimmers inspect the electrical cord for fraying or damage.
- If a grass trimmer fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the grass trimmer from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.

Operating Precautions

- Always wear safety glasses or goggles and gloves when using a grass trimmer.
- Wear long pants and sturdy shoes (i.e., no sneakers or sandals) when using a grass trimmer. Do not wear loose clothing.
- Always start a gasoline-powered grass trimmer outside. Do not operate a gasoline-powered grass trimmer inside an enclosed space (i.e., sheds or garages) where carbon monoxide exhaust gas can accumulate.
- Prior to starting, inspect the work area and pick up all loose objects (i.e., sticks, stones, pieces of glass/metal, etc.) that could be thrown by the grass trimmer.
- When working outdoors, wear the appropriate clothing and sun protection for the weather conditions and consume adequate amounts of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Always operate the grass trimmer with the cutting head below the waist. Avoid overreaching with a grass trimmer.
- Exercise caution when trimming grass near trees or shrubs with low hanging branches.
- Never fuel a gasoline-powered grass trimmer when the engine is hot. Use a rag to wipe up fuel spills.
- Shut off the grass trimmer and disconnect the spark plug wire or electric cord before performing mechanical adjustments, maintenance, or repairs or clearing/unclogging the underside of the cutting attachment and shield.
- Maintain the grass trimmer according to the manufacturer's instructions, including cleaning, lubricating, and storage of the grass trimmer.