

Guidelines for Protecting Youth Workers

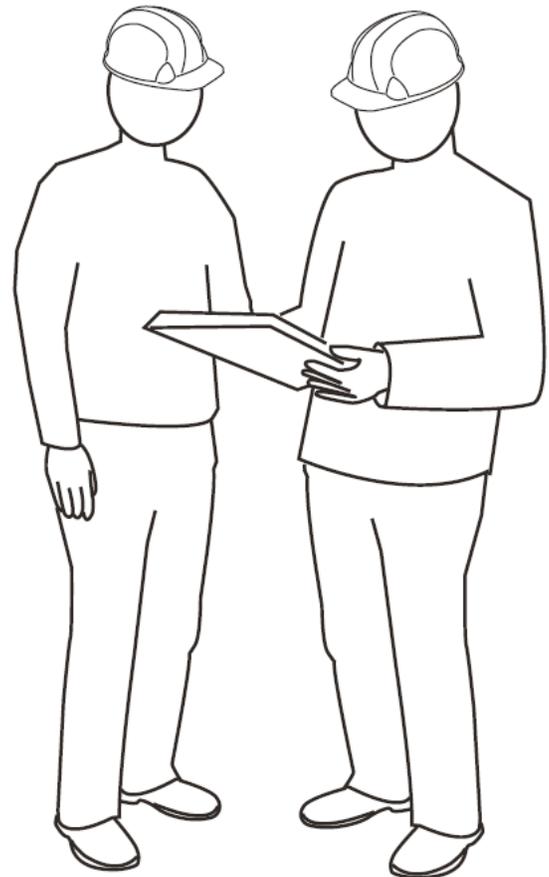
Promote Safe Practices and Protect Youth Workers

Introduction

A large number of teenage workers in the U.S. engage in summer jobs for reasons such as their own development, gaining work experience, developing work skills and generating funds for furthering their education and other expenses. Estimates show approximately 2.3 million teenagers engage in summer jobs annually. This total will be significantly higher if thousands of teenagers engaged in agricultural activities are also included. They are not included in this statistics because they are exempt from the child labor laws. Each year, many teen workers experience work related injuries because of the complexity associated with the operations they engage in and inadequate prior work experience. A study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) observed one death every eleven days and an additional 400 injuries per day due to workplace mishaps. These numbers may rise if more teenagers join the work force due to a depressed economy.

Significant reduction in the number of accidents and injuries are possible with the adoption of safe practices with the equipment they use. To start with, all parties involved (youth workers, guardians and supervisors) should be fully engaged in all aspects of work. They collectively should select the jobs for the youth workers taking into consideration factors such as age, size, prior experience, interest, and their ability. Then, depending on the job selected, youth workers must be trained by the supervisor or other experienced individuals within the organization before they are assigned the job. In addition, every opportunity they have, the guardians and the supervisors should impress upon these youngsters the importance of work place safety.

A significant number of young workers working in the green industry during summer engage in lawn care and landscape related activities. Even though these activities may appear to be safe and easy, the operations can be very complex and dangerous if they use power equipment without proper training. Estimates show that the rate of accidents in this industry is about four times than in other industries. This high rate may be attributed to the diverse types of equipment they use, inadequate work experience among workers, poor work environment, communication



difficulties, and terrain. Among the youth 15-19 years of age, Costilla and Bishai (2006) found highest hospitalization rate from lawnmower injuries. A similar study by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reported over 37,000 riding mower related injuries during 2003-2005. During the same period, there were 95 fatalities due to riding mower upsets. The goal of this training guide is to reduce the number of accidents and related injuries among the youth workers serving the green industry by improving the work place safety. This training guide is prepared specifically for employers or supervisors of youth workers in the green industry. In addition to familiarizing the supervisors/employers with the regulations associated with hiring of youth workers, this guide discusses the steps they can take to make the work place safer. It also touches on the responsibilities of guardians and youth workers in improving the work place safety.

Major Players

Who are the major players responsible for protecting youth workers from injuries at the work place? The three groups of individuals directly involved are the youth workers, their guardians, and their employers/supervisors. Direct involvement and participation from each in these three groups is essential for improving the workplace safety. Guardians and supervisors/ employers must utilize every opportunity they get to share the importance of work place safety with the youth workers. All three should be directly involved in selecting the job for the youth workers. Jobs must be matched with the individuals based on experience, interest, and ability. Responsibilities of individuals in each group are discussed in detail in the later sections.

Responsibilities

This section deals primarily with the responsibilities of each individual. It discusses the steps they can take to improve work place safety and protect the youth workers from injuries. Since this publication is directed towards, employers/supervisors, their responsibilities are discussed in greater details as compared to the other two groups. This section not only identifies the employer/supervisor responsibilities, but also introduces them to the OSHA/NIOSH regulations in employing the youth workers.



Employer/Supervisor Responsibilities

OSHA/NIOSH Regulations

In 1970 the U.S. Congress passed into law the OSHA Act. Based on this act, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration was established with the primary responsibility to assure every working person in the nation a safe and healthy work environment. All businesses employing one or more employees are required to meet the standards of this act. OSHA regulations expect the employers to provide employees with hazard free jobs. The regulation also addresses what is acceptable and what is

not under what circumstances and how businesses can protect workers and improve workplace safety. Rules and regulations are much stricter when young workers are employed. For this reason, it is extremely important that employers/supervisors become familiar with OSHA regulations and make the work place safer. Employers may obtain the most current information on the regulations by visiting the site www.osha.gov. Considering the length and the fact that the regulations are revised periodically, they are not listed in this document

Evaluation of Crew Member

Each and every crew member hired must be evaluated for his/her work experience, interest, background, and abilities. This background information is essential to match the individual worker with responsibilities they can manage safely and for custom designing training programs for the crew members. It is the responsibility of the employer/supervisor to match each young worker with responsibilities that can be managed. Depending on prior experience and background, the job identified may range from simple manual operation to highly complicated operation with highly sophisticated equipment.



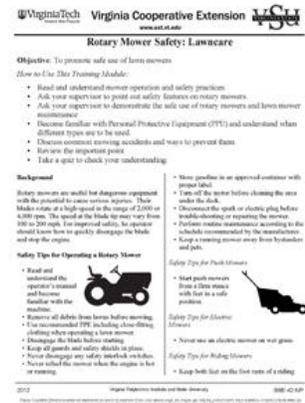
Training Program

Irrespective of the operation/s selected for an individual youth worker, an important responsibility of the employer/supervisor is to custom design training programs for the employees emphasizing safe operation. In addition to the training program, all employees must be given the opportunity to study the operator’s manual for the machine/s he/she will be operating. Operator’s manuals contain valuable information on how to operate the machine safely, potential hazards associated with the machine, safety features, maintenance information and recommendations for protective clothing during the operation of the equipment. A typical training program for the youth workers in the green industry may include the following (See Resource section for factsheets and training modules):

- Rotary Mower Safety
- Tractor Safety
- Utility Type Vehicles Safety
- Hand Tools Safety
- Powered Hand Tool Safety
- Guidelines for Protecting Youth Workers

Periodic Performance Evaluation

Following training, when the employees are working, periodic on the job performance evaluation will be appropriate. This may be an announced or unannounced evaluation. Employer/Supervisor should share the results of the evaluation with the employees and suggest ways to improve their performance. If any



safety violations were observed during evaluation or any other time, they should be shared with the employee and corrected.

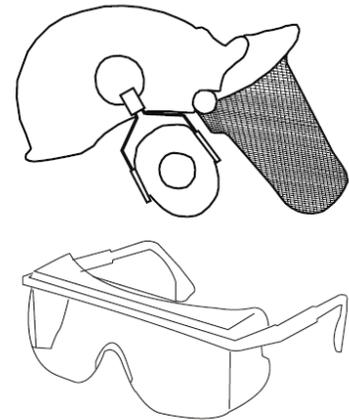
Meetings with the Crew

It is a good practice that employers/supervisors have periodic meetings with youth workers. Part of all such meetings should be dedicated for the discussion of safety issues associated with the responsibilities assigned to the individual. In addition to stressing the importance of work place safety, part of the meeting should be devoted to discuss safety violations and near misses by youth workers and the steps they can take to prevent such dangerous situations. Sharing stories of people injured in equipment mishaps will be an effective way of stressing the importance of operating machines safely.

Personal Protective Equipment

OSHA regulations require use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during work to protect the workers. Youth workers engaged in lawn care or landscaping work will need more protection than what good work clothes can provide. Supervisors/employers must be familiar with the PPE devices, their functions and uses to recommend appropriate PPEs to youth workers.

Head must be protected with hard hats and not a bump cap. Hard hats protect against bumps and falling objects. They are recommended for building work, trimming trees, and on jobs where falling objects could cause injury. Hard hats meeting the standard are identified by the ANZI Z89.1 code.



Eyes are very sensitive and they need to be protected from flying objects, chemicals, dust, and chaff. Protective eye glass is highly recommended for activities related to lawn care and landscape. It is also recommended when working outdoors with power equipment in dusty conditions. Approved eye protection will also be marked with an ANSI Z87.1 coding stamp.

Continuous exposure to high noise level can cause hearing loss and therefore workers should be protected from noise produced by outdoor power equipment. Danger of hearing loss may begin to occur when exposed noise levels of 85 decibels (dB) or more continuously. Sound pressure level doubles for every 3dB rise in sound level. For this reason, the safe exposure period halves for every five dB rise in sound level. In other words, if the allowable exposure time to a noise level of 90dB is eight hours per day, the allowable exposure time goes down to four hours/day when exposed to a noise level of 95 dB. Protective devices ranging from ear plugs to ear muffs are available to protect the hearing of youth workers. Ear protective devices are selected based on noise reduction rating (NRR). This rating provides an indication of the noise reduction provided by the device. For example, an ear plug with a NRR 26 rating may mean that the ear plug may potentially reduce the noise level the inner year is exposed to by 26 dB. Unfortunately, the real noise level reduction that can be expected is only half the rated reduction.

While ear plugs are good for ear protection, ear muffs are more effective because they have the added advantage of keeping dust and dirt out of the ear canal.

Cuts, abrasions, and skin irritations are common when engaged in outside work. These may be prevented with the use of gloves. Leather gloves are more effective in terms of protection and gripping power. Canvas and cotton gloves are also good for providing limited protection. However, they are not recommended for handling chemicals and pesticides because they absorb and expose the user to the chemicals. Nitrile gloves are the best for handling chemicals.

Types of Hearing Protection:

Ear Plugs



- ▶ Clean hands.
- ▶ Roll ear plug between fingers to compress it.
- ▶ Grasp ear from behind your head with opposite hand and pull up to straighten ear canal.
- ▶ Insert ear plug until it blocks sound, then hold in place while it expands. (Count out loud to 20 while it expands.)
- ▶ Ear plug must completely fill ear canal.
- ▶ Test fit by cupping hands over ears and then releasing. There should not be much difference in sound.
- ▶ Wash reusable plugs in warm soapy water after use/throw away disposable after each use.

Hearing Bands



- ▶ Grasp ear from behind your head with opposite hand and pull up to straighten ear canal.
- ▶ Use your hands to press the ear pads into the ear canals.
- ▶ Test fit in a noisy environment: Lightly press band inward and you should not notice much reduction in noise level.

Ear Muffs



- ▶ Make sure the cushions fully cover the ear and seal tightly against the head.
- ▶ Hold the headband at the crown of the head and adjust each cup.
- ▶ Test fit in a noisy environment: Gently push the cups toward your head and release. There should not be much difference in noise level.

Workers working outside under dusty conditions should always wear respiratory protection devices during work. A wide variety of these devices ranging from mask respirators to full face respirators are commercially available. The effectiveness of these devices depends on their design. For example, while

some devices are designed to filter out pesticide vapors, others are designed to filter out the dust. For this reason, it is important that the user select the device matching his/her specific needs.

Equipment Upkeep

Most lawn care businesses will have a variety of equipment the workers use to fulfill their day to day responsibilities. How well and how safely the equipment will work depend on how well they are maintained. This responsibility for the upkeep of all the machines should be assigned to a senior member within the organization. The upkeep may include maintenance, repairs and tightening of all loose guards and shields. Poorly maintained machines are unsafe and may result in breakdowns and injuries.

Personal Health Issues

Lawn care workers generally work under extreme weather conditions ranging from very cold to very hot. Employers/ Supervisors should be familiar with the steps they can take to protect these workers from these extreme conditions. They should also know what to do when the workers are stressed by extreme hot or cold temperatures. It is hard for anyone to be highly productive under extreme weather conditions. While it is impossible to control the weather, it is possible to protect the human body. When working in cold conditions, one needs to dress warm. This must be done by selecting clothing that is right for the job. For example, bulky clothes such as snow mobile suit may not be appropriate if the worker will be active in the cold.

Working in hot humid conditions poses greater challenges. While working in the hot sun, significant water loss may occur due to excessive perspiration. One must drink enough water to balance this water loss and to maintain normal body temperature. Working in high temperature and high humidity conditions may cause the body to overheat quickly due to lack of evaporation of perspiration.

Considering the amount of time the workers spend under hot sun on a daily basis, Employers/supervisors should also be concerned about skin cancer due to excessive exposure to sun. They should take precautionary measures to protect their employees. . Individuals most at risk are those with fair complexion and those who can burn easily. Protective steps the employers can take may include avoiding the skin exposure to the sun during the midday between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., providing protective clothing to cover



Use Hand Signals



the skin, headwear covering face, ears and back of the neck and sunscreen.

Bee, wasp, hornet and yellow jackets are also major concerns among workers engaged in lawn care and landscape operations. It is estimated that approximately two million in the U.S. are allergic insect venom. Every year 90 to 100 die due to sting reaction. Employers/ Supervisors should be familiar with the steps they can take to counteract insect bites or stings. It is also important to familiarize the employees with this information.

Hand Signals for Communication

Most equipment used in lawn care operations is extremely noisy and therefore the best way to communicate with fellow workers when the machines are running is to use hand signals. Employers/ Supervisors and the crew members alike should be able to communicate with hand signals effectively to prevent accidents and save time. For consistency and to minimize confusion, several engineering societies have standardized the hand signals and their meaning and they are summarized in the figure above.

Check Lists

Work place safety may be improved significantly by controlling which machine can be operated by whom. Depending on training, age, experience, skill, and interest, all youth workers may not be able to operate all machines used for lawn care operations. The number of machines that can be operated by each worker may vary from person to person. For this reason, it is a good practice that the employer/supervisor to maintain a list of equipment available with the names of individuals authorized to operate each machine. Such a list will prevent unauthorized individuals using the equipment without prior experience. For this system to work efficiently, it is critical that the check list be current all the time.

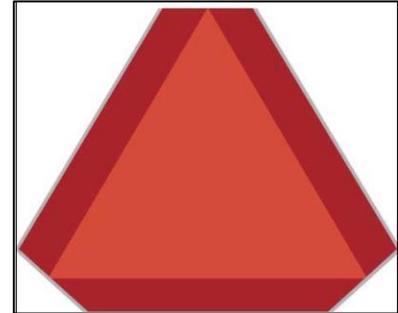


General Safety Rules

Most equipment used in lawn care and landscape operations are simple and straight forward to use. However, if they are not operated carefully, it can result in accidents and injuries. In order to make the work place safer and reduce the number of mishaps, employer/supervisor may enforce the following general safety rules for the youth workers to follow strictly.

- Develop a “safety first” attitude among the youth workers.
- Ensure that crew members are physically and mentally prepared to operate the equipment.
- Never operate machines under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol.
- Receive training prior to operating a machine.
- Use PPEs and protective clothing personal protection.

- Never allow additional riders on machines. Most machines are designed only for one, the operator.
- Remove bystanders from work areas.
- Refuel the equipment only when its engine is cold and turned off.
- Turn off the engine and remove the switch key when the equipment is parked or left unattended. This is also true when trouble shooting, unclogging and repairing a machine.
- Prior to operating a machine, make sure that all safety guards and shields are in place intact.
- All tractors must be equipped with ROPS.
- When lawn care equipment is taken on roadways, display a Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) Emblem on it.
- Maintain proper speed.
- Avoid operations on steep slopes to prevent tractor roll over.



Child Labor Laws

Most states, if not all, have child labor laws to protect the health and safety of young workers, to prevent exploitation, and to ensure that work does not interfere with their educational opportunities. Lawncare businesses employing youth workers should be familiar with the law and they required to enforce them strictly. It spells out clearly how minors can qualify for employment, types of work activities they are allowed to engage in as a minor, and how long they are allowed to work each day during the academic year and during summer.

Employers and supervisors employing minors have the responsibility to protect them from injuries. This may mean that an employer may not put a minor in a situation that can endanger his/her life or health. Employers must understand the laws clearly and enforce them strictly to avoid severe civil and criminal penalties.

It is also important to note that while an employer is in compliance with the state laws, there is potential that he/she may be in violation of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Employers who are covered by federal law must ensure that they are in compliance with federal as well as Virginia laws. For most current child laws at the state and federal levels, readers are referred to the websites listed in the reference section.

Responsibilities of Guardians

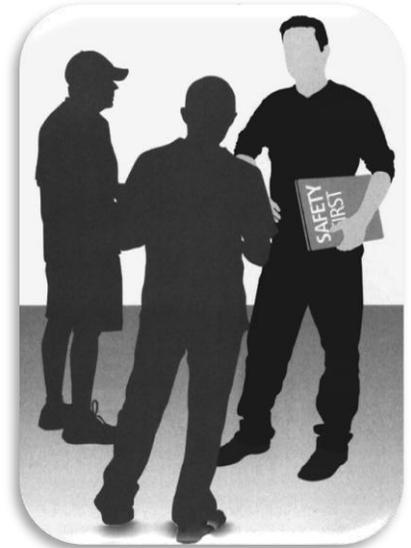
Guardians play an important role in improving work place safety when young workers are involved. As they are generally the first to introduce the youngsters to work place safety, Guardians must take time to discuss and instill the importance of safety at work place with their youngsters. Starting from a very young age, children should be taught how different equipment can be used safely in and around the homes. As they grow up, guardians should introduce them to different power equipment commonly used in and around homes. When they are ready, under their supervision, youths should be given the opportunity to operate the equipment safely. When it is time to join the work force, the guardians should be directly involved in selecting the right job for their young worker. While working, it is good practice for guardians to have periodic discussions with youth workers to learn more about how they are doing at

their work place and how well they are doing in terms of safety. Guardians may also make sure that PPEs and other protective gears are available to them and they are using them effectively. Their direct involvement will also be beneficial to assess how effective the employer is in terms of making the work place safe. They should also be familiar with the resources for parents of young workers available at [http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/parents of youth/](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/parents%20of%20youth/)

Responsibilities of Youth Workers

The youth workers engaged in lawn care and landscape activities play an important role in keeping their work place safe because they are directly involved in carrying out the operations. There are number precautionary measures they can take to improve the work place safety. The following are selected examples of such measures one can take to reduce the number of accidents and associated personal injuries.

- Study the operator’s manual carefully and become familiar with the safety features of the machines, maintenance details and operation before operating any equipment.
- Get trained on the safe use of machines before operating them.
- Make sure the equipment to be used is maintained properly and all the safety features of the equipment are in place and functional.
- Make sure all the guards and shields are in place properly.
- Understand OSHA regulations and the responsibilities of the employer in terms of providing a safe work place. When not conformed or safety violations occur, bring it to the attention of employer/supervisor for corrective actions.
- When working, use all the PPEs and appropriate clothing for protection.
- When working in the field, make sure that adequate supply of water and a first aid kit are available.
- Report repair and maintenance needs to the supervisor responsible for them.
- Review resources for young workers by going to the site:
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/youthlabor/studentworker/>



Pledge Sheet

While it is the responsibility of the employer to provide the youth workers with a safe work place, both the guardians and youth workers play critical roles in keeping the work place safe and reducing the number of accidents and associated injuries. For this reason the guardians and youth workers are asked to understand their responsibilities and sign a pledge sheet included in Appendix A to demonstrate their commitment for keeping work place safe.



Resources

Hand Tools Safety: Lawncare

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/BSE-40/BSE-40NP.html>

Powered Hand Tool Safety: Lawncare

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/BSE-41/BSE-41NP.html>

Rotary Mower Safety: Lawncare

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/BSE-42/BSE-42NP.html>

Tractor Safety: Lawncare

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/BSE-43/BSE-43NP.html>

Utility Type Vehicle (UTV) Safety: Lawncare

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/BSE/BSE-44/BSE-44NP.html>

Training Modules:

UTV Safety: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/safe-utv/>

Mower Safety: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/safe-mower/>

Powered Handtool Safety: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/safe-ptools>

Handtool Safety: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/safe-htools>

Tractor Safety: <http://connect.ag.vt.edu/safe-tractor>

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USDOL (U.S. Department of Labor). Youth in agriculture: Noise. Occupational Safety & Health Administration, OSHA, Washington, DC <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/agriculture/workers.html#Noise> (Accessed on October 24, 2011)

USDOL (U.S. Department of Labor). Federal Child Labor Provisions for Non Agricultural Occupations Under the Fair Labor Standards Act. <http://www.dol.gov/whd/.../childlabor.pdf>

Virginia Child Labor Laws (804) 786-2386, source: <http://www.stopchildlabor.org/USchildlabor/kidprime.htm>

OSU. Tailgate safety training for landscaping and horticultural services. The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. <http://ohioline.osu.edu/aex-fact/192/> (Accessed on October 24, 2011)

Example titles from series:

Introduction to Safety in Landscaping and Horticulture Services for Trainers and Supervisors - AEX 192.2.24

Bee, Wasp, Hornet, and Yellow Jacket Stings for Trainers and Supervisors - AEX 192.2.03

Caught In or Between Objects for Trainers and Supervisors -AEX 192.2.05

Equipment and Plant Transport for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.13

First Aid Kit for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.16

First on the Scene for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.17

Hand Signals for Vehicle Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.21

No Riders on Lawn Equipment for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.32

Personal Eye Protection for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.35

Poison Ivy, Poison Oak, and Poison Sumac for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.37

Power Lawn Mowers for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.39

Power-Take-Off (PTO) Shielding for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.40

Preventing Lifting and Overexertion Injuries for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.44
Preventing Machine Hazards for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.45
Protecting Against Cold for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.48
Protecting Against Noise for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.49
Protecting Hands and Fingers for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.50
Protecting the Head for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.51
Protective Gloves for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.52
Repetitive Motion for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.54
Rollovers and Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX
192.2.56
Rotary Lawn and Brush Mower Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.57
Safe Use of Hand-Held Tools for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.61
Safe Use of the Power-Take-Off (PTO) for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.64
Safely Starting and Stopping a Tractor for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.66
Safe Use of Tractors and Self-Propelled Equipment for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.65
Small-Engine Machine Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.70
Spider Bites for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.71
Stress Management for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.73
Substance Abuse and Accidents for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.75
Sun Exposure for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.76
Tick Bites for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.79
Tractor Loader Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.80
Tractors, Towed Equipment, and Highway Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.81
Tree Pruning and Ladder Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.82
Tree Pruning, Trimming, and Felling Safety for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.83
Workplace Violence for Trainers and Supervisors-AEX 192.2.86

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Appendix A

Guardian Pledge

I _____ (print name) understand my responsibilities for improving work place safety for youth workers. I pledge to take appropriate steps to accomplish this objective.

Signature

____--____

Date

Youth Worker Pledge

I _____ (print name) understand the steps I can take as a young worker for improving the safety in the work place. I pledge to take these steps to reduce the number of accidents and injuries at the work place.

Signature

____--____

Date

Credits

This module was developed with the support of National Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification (Grant No. USDA/NIFA-2010-41521-20830), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Team members contributed to the development of this module include: Robert Grisso, John Perumpral, Don Ohanehi, Mike Goatley, Kathleen Jamison, Cathy Sutphin, Dan Swafford, and Carl Estes. Authors would also like to acknowledge the contribution of students (Matt Kandel, Andy Karpin, Jeremy Smith, JD McCoy, Jonathan Dooks, Meghan Laporta, Kristianne Macaraeg, Theresa Garwood, Chris Hollie and Adam Goatley) who participated in the project.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Department of Labor.