Working Safely Outdoors

With the return of warmer weather comes the welcomed opportunity to return to working outside. The sounds of summer like birds chirping in the sun, rollerblades gliding along and lawnmowers trimming the grass are once again filling the air. It can be easy to overlook the importance of safety while enjoying the outdoors. A moment or two of preparation can go a long way to ensure a safe summer of outdoor activity.

Some helpful points to be mindful of include:

- **For mowers and other fuel fired equipment:**
  - Read, understand and follow all instructions on the machine and in the manual(s).
  - Conduct a pre-mowing inspection of the lawn and remove any debris, rocks, limbs, or other items that could become a projectile. Look for concealed hazards such as holes.
  - Wear eye and hearing protection as required.
  - Mow up and down slopes, not across to prevent mower rollover.
  - Wear long pants, sturdy shoes and work gloves.
  - **When spraying herbicides or pesticides:**
    - Use a separate sprayer for each and label the sprayers to prevent a mix up. Never mix herbicides and pesticides.
    - Don’t spray on a windy day or during high temperatures.
    - Measure chemicals carefully and according to directions.
  - Clean sprayer tank thoroughly and safely. Rinse the interior 3 times and run clean water through the nozzle.
  - Wear appropriate personal protective equipment as required: safety goggles, impermeable gloves, respirator, etc...

- **Working in the sun and heat:**
  - Working in the sun and heat can put extra stress on your body. Stay hydrated and take frequent breaks.
  - Be sure to apply sunblock adequately and reapply every two hours if you are sweating.
  - Wear a hat, sunglasses, and seek shade.
Summer Weather

NOAA’s National Weather Service (NWS) wants you to be prepared for hazardous weather year-round. The aim of the National Seasonal Safety Campaign is to build a Weather-Ready Nation, one that is prepared for extreme weather, water, and climate events. Along with the return to warmer temperatures and sunny days of summer, it’s important to be aware of the weather hazards that may arise.

Some of the main summer weather hazards in our area consist of tornadoes, thunderstorms, lightning, flooding, wildfire and air quality. The NWS highlights the following aspects of each:

- **Tornadoes:**
  - Winds from tornadoes can exceed 200 mph.
  - Flying debris is most dangerous.
  - Seek a sturdy shelter in an interior room away from windows on the lowest floor and cover your head.

- **Thunderstorms:**
  - Severe thunderstorms produce strong wind and/or large hail.
  - Take shelter in a sturdy structure away from windows.
  - A vehicle is also a safe location when there is no other nearby shelter.
  - Strong wind gusts from thunderstorms can create dust storms.
  - Dust storms can reduce visibility and make travel difficult.
  - If travelling, prepare to reduce speed and pull over to the side of the road.

- **Lightning:**
  - All thunderstorms produce lightning.
  - Lightning kills an average of 30 people every year.
  - Take shelter inside a sturdy structure.
  - A hard-topped vehicle is also a safe location.

- **Flooding:**
  - Flooding is often caused by heavy rain in the summer.
  - More than half of all flood fatalities are vehicle-related.
  - Never drive through flood waters.

- **Wild Fires:**
  - Wildfires are most often started by lightning or humans.
  - Stay with your fire when camping.
  - Fully extinguish your fire when finished.
  - Never burn on dry windy days.
  - If you encounter a wildfire, drive or walk away from the smoke and flames immediately.
  - Call 911 and report the fire.
  - If told to evacuate, follow instructions from local officials.
  - Follow the evacuation route and contact loved ones once you’ve reach safety.

- **Air Quality:**
  - Smoke from wildfires can travel thousands of miles and cause poor air quality.
  - Keep door and windows closed to reduce infiltration into your home.
  - Harmful buildup of ground-level ozone can enhance health problems such as asthma.
  - Limit strenuous outdoor activity on days with poor air quality.
Many of us were ready last March to eagerly get rid of no longer wanted large items or appliances, only to find that the annual Cleanup Week was postponed. After all, it doesn’t get much easier than only having to move said items to the curb. The rescheduled dates mean having to hold onto these items for a little while longer. The newly scheduled Cleanup Week has been moved to the week of Sept. 14-18, 2020. It is important to remember that each community has its own set of rules to follow. Following these guidelines will ensure all your unwanted items are taken and make it easier for those removing them. Common rules include:

- **Separate items** of the same type into distinct piles (tires, appliances, furniture, brush, household garbage, etc.). Separate trucks collect the items.

- **Place garbage in disposable containers**, except for oversized items.

- Items will be collected on your normal garbage pickup day. Do not set items out more than one day early.

- Crews will not return to pick up garbage set out too late.

- **Remove refrigerator and freezer doors**. Do not place food or any other waste inside appliances.

- **Items must be from residences**; no commercial waste will be accepted. Keep household garbage at least four feet away from other Cleanup Week items.

**Power line Safety**

Xcel Energy is reminding everyone to be aware of the hazard that power lines present. Before working outside, first look up and all around to see if there are any overhead power lines above the work area. Keep yourself, your tools and your equipment at least 10 feet away from overhead lines at all times. This includes transporting ladders or other equipment. Be sure to carry all tools horizontally, especially ladders to ensure proper balance and avoid accidental contact. The only safe contact is no contact.

Call 811 before you dig.

Many of today’s electric lines are buried underground and could run right through your yard. One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked AND helps protect yourself from unnecessary injury or expense. Contact 811 to have buried utility lines marked by a professional before beginning any digging projects, such as planting a tree, installing a mailbox or building a deck. Once the lines are identified, respect the marks and avoid digging near them. The line may be shallower than you think due to natural shifts in the ground.

Be aware that you might have electric or natural gas lines on your property that you own (e.g., outdoor grills, propane lines, dog fencing) that will not be located.
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