

Environmental Health & Safety

Title: Safe Operation and Servicing of String Trimmers, Lawn Mowers, and Brush Cutters	
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I. Purpose of this Policy: To ensure string trimmers, lawn mowers, and brush cutters (i.e., Lawn Care Equipment), are operated in safe manner that controls and minimizes the safety hazards to workers, staff and the public.

II. Scope: This policy identifies the hazards and the minimum personnel protective equipment (PPE) and safety requirements, that shall be followed when operating and maintaining Lawn Care Equipment.

III. Applicability/Responsibility:

- 1) All State University of New York College at Buffalo (BSC) employees, who operate or supervise operation of Lawn Care Equipment, as part of their job duties are responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of this Policy and Procedure. This includes full time, part time, seasonal workers and student assistants.
- 2) The Environmental and Safety (EH&S) Office is responsible for identifying safety hazards, specifying appropriate controls and safe practices, monitoring work conditions and practices, and directing corrective actions for identified safety deficiencies.

IV. Policy and Procedure:

- 1) Hazard Identification - Cuts; finger or toe amputations; eye injuries; hearing loss; burns; bruises; injuries to other people.
- 2) Mandatory Personnel Protective Equipment - At a minimum the following shall be worn or used, unless otherwise directed by the EH&S Office:
 - A) String trimmers:
 - SAFETY GLASSES OR GOGGLES;
 - HEARING PROTECTION (EAR PLUGS OR MUFFS)*;
 - LONG PANTS AND CLOSE FITTING CLOTHES; AND
 - STURDY, NON-SLIP SOLED SHOES THAT COVER THE ENTIRE FOOT OR WORKBOOTS.
 - B) Brush cutters:
 - SAFETY GLASSES OR GOGGLES;
 - FULL FACE SHIELD;
 - HEARING PROTECTION (EAR PLUGS OR EARMUFFS)*;
 - LONG PANTS AND CLOSE FITTING CLOTHES; AND
 - WORK BOOTS.

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C) Lawn mowers:

- SAFETY GLASSES OR GOGGLES;
- HEARING PROTECTION (EAR PLUGS OR EARMUFFS)*;
- LONG PANTS AND CLOSE FITTING CLOTHES; AND
- WORK BOOTS.

* Note: Wearing of music headsets is prohibited while operating and maintaining the above equipment

3) Pre-Operation:

- A) Training - Employees shall be properly trained in the operation of the Lawn Care Equipment before use. The training shall consist of reading the operator's manual or training provided by someone, who is experienced, through prior operation/maintenance of the actual piece of equipment. Learn the controls before using.
- B) Hazardous Objects - Check the area to be mowed or trimmed for locations of hazardous objects (debris, posts, etc) and utility (electric, etc) lines and pick up objects that can be turned into projectiles or damage the equipment. Tools cans, rocks, twigs, and wire are examples of objects that can be hazardous to bystanders and equipment operators. Rock, twigs etc can be placed in spoils piles or construction demolition debris piles/dumpsters. Wire and metal should be taken to the scrap pile. Litter shall be placed in a litter receptacle. Disposal down the storm sewer is prohibited (see Storm Water Pollution Prevention Policy and Procedure).
- C) Fueling - Use the proper fuel. Do not overfill the tank, leave room for expansion. Do not add fuel if engine is hot as spilled gasoline could ignite. Never light a match or other ignition source around gasoline. Do not fuel up over or near storm drain inlets or catch basins. No smoking when adding fuel.
- D) Inspect the unit - Check the equipment before use for damage and potential hazards, such as missing or damaged guards, loose or damaged muffler, loose bolts and screws, and get it repaired before use.

4) Operating and Servicing:

- A) Shields and discharge guards shall be in proper working order and in the proper position to prevent projectiles during operation.
- B) Ensure people are at a safe distance when operating. For string trimmers and brush cutters, maintain a minimum distance of 30 feet from bystanders and stop immediately, if approached.
- C) Start the unit on a relatively smooth, solid surface in an open area.
- D) Hold the unit with both hands.

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- E) Hold the trimmer head below waist level and stand upright not bent over. Stand on the correct side of the trimmer: for a curved shaft cut on your left side. On a straight shaft, cut on your right side.
- F) Bring the equipment up to operating speed before starting to cut vegetation. Cut tall vegetation from the top down when using a string trimmer. This allows the trimmer to chop into fine pieces and prevent tangling.
- G) Look at the targeted cutting area for hazardous objects before placing the unit into the area.
- H) Avoid discharging the cuttings into the storm sewer.
- I) Stop the engine before servicing or setting the cutter down. Idle down if there is a throttle. Most trimmers have a centrifugal clutch to allow the head to stop when you idle down. Don't trust it as these clutches are notoriously unreliable.
- J) Secure the fuel cover and equipment before transport.
- K) **ALWAYS** disconnect the spark plug or ignition source before servicing. Avoid placing hands near the blade, use a twig or wooden stick.
- L) Use an approved safety containers for transporting fuel.