

Safety

SOLUTIONS



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Deaths and Serious Injuries Continue to Occur

A 30 year old worker at a landscape company was trimming trees when the equipment came into contact with a live overhead power line. The worker received an electrical shock and died.

A 52 year old employee at another company was helping his co-workers move mowing equipment to a different location. The worker fell off the mower deck he was riding on, struck his head on concrete pavement, and died.

A 30 year old worker operating a skid-steer loader on flat land near a steep slope became distracted, and backed up the equipment over the edge. The skid-steer rolled several times down the 140 foot slope; the employee escaped with a ruptured intestine and a broken wrist.

And a longtime field manager who wasn't wearing protective leg chaps was cutting the roots of a stump with a chain saw while standing on one of the roots. He slipped, and the chain saw came off and at his leg, severing his Achilles tendon. "He was lucky he didn't cut his whole leg off," another manager said.

Tip of the iceberg

These injuries and deaths are among the many incidents that are continuing to occur in our industry. Until our injury/incident rate dramatically falls, workers' compensation costs will continue to rise, and OSHA will continue to target us as one of the top seven highest hazard industries in the United States. What can you do?

- Implement a strong written safety program that includes *strict* disciplinary action against violators of your safety rules.
- Carefully document and track all injuries/incidents. Share results with *all* employees and take action on emerging trends.
- Join PLANET's STARS Safe Company Program, which will help you bring safety to a higher level at your company.
- Take advantage of the State OSHA Consultation Program other free resources to assist you in reducing hazards.

Tips to Assist You in the Event of an OSHA Probe

Editor's note: On Page 1 of our April issue of Safety SOLUTIONS, we gave you some tips to help you in the event of an OSHA inspection. These additional tips were prepared with the assistance of Mike Casey, vice-president of loss control at Harris Farms in Coalinga, California.

- Know that a federal OSHA inspector is likely to immediately want to see: your OSHA Form 300 Logs of Work-related Injuries and Illnesses from the last three years; the posting of the required OSHA poster – either the *Job Safety & Health Protection* or the *You Have a Right to a Safe Workplace* poster; and your company's written safety policy, safety program, and safety training records.
 - Know in advance your OSHA SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) and which OSHA regulations you are required to follow. (*Note: Most PLANET members fall under OSHA SIC 0781, 0782 or 0783. If you operate in a state with a state-run OSHA plan, be sure to check your state-specific information.*)
 - Establish in advance a means of correcting known hazards. It's a good idea to have supervisors and/or Safety Committee members do safety audits of areas in which they do not regularly work.
 - Establish in advance procedures for reporting all injuries, illnesses and "near misses" to management. *Require employees to report these.*
- Then follow up with prompt investigations, and document remedies implemented as the result of these incidents.
- Ensure that all supervisors and other managers know when and how they are required to report serious injuries and deaths to OSHA. Develop written reporting procedures.
 - Hold an opening conference with the OSHA inspector. Determine why the person is there (accident, complaint, etc.) and the scope of the inspection.
 - Know what records an OSHA inspector is legally entitled to see. Expect to be asked for more records than you have to – or should – show him or her.
 - Limit the routes you take to the site of the inspection. This is critically important since the inspector has the right to cite a company for violations in "plain view."
 - Know your rights, the rights of the inspector, and the rights of your employees.
 - Train your supervisors and other managers to *only* respond to relevant questions the OSHA inspector asks, and to be brief in their response.
 - Take at least one maintenance worker along on the "walk-around" inspection to correct any hazards that can be corrected on the spot.
 - Hold a closing conference at the end of the inspection. Know that the inspector may or may not tell you about pending citations. Either way, do not argue and **DO NOT PROMISE** anything at this stage.

STARS Enters Phase 2: Growing Safer Companies

If you haven't yet joined PLANET's STARS Safe Company Program, now is the time to get on board! This *free* program, already more than 520 company members strong, recently entered Phase 2 – growing safe businesses and assisting them in bringing safety to an even higher level.

A new volunteer STARS Champions Advisory Council is making itself available to STARS members who want to know how their peers have handled specific safety issues. Council members are: Laurie Bishop, The Bruce Co.; Elias Godinez, Pacific Landscape Management; Marylou Ladaga, KIRA Inc.; Mari Medrano, CoCal Landscape; and Jerry Schumacher, Vande Hey's Landscape Center.

Phase 2 also calls for collecting "effective safety practices" from all STARS members, and collecting data to assist member companies in lowering their injury/incident rates. For a STARS pledge form (to join STARS), contact Ilene Manster at (800) 395-2522.

Safety UPDATE from Student Career Days

Numerous safety-related activities took place at PLANET's Student Career Days (SCD) at the University of Maryland in March. Among them were:

PLANET's Safety/Insurance Committee: The meeting was attended by new member Laurie Bishop of The Bruce Co. and other members and interested persons. Discussion included: the launching of STARS Phase 2;

development of a new STARS Web page; two new planned safe driving DVDs; and recent serious injuries and deaths in our industry. The committee also added to PLANET's safety-related goals getting our industry off of OSHA's list of the top seven highest hazard industries in the U.S.

PLANET-OSHA Alliance Implementation Team: Our OSHA Alliance liaison Rick Harris reported that the Alliance booth at SCD was very successful – both students and out-of-state faculty had numerous questions about OSHA and our Alliance. He said that the new Safety and Health Topics Web pages for Landscape and Horticultural Services being developed through our Alliance were nearing completion.

Rick also said that our Alliance is doing well in terms of meeting our written goals, and that Alliance representatives hope to again have a strong presence at PLANET's 2005 Green Industry Conference (GIC).

In addition, Rick reported that OSHA recently created a new Fact Sheet about our Alliance for distribution at SCD, and that an article on our Alliance written by PLANET Safety Specialist Barb Mulhern was appearing on the front page of the Spring issue of the *Alliance Quarterly Newsletter*.

OSHA High Hazard Workplaces
If you are one of 14,000 employers who have been notified by OSHA that your injury and illness rates are higher than average, we strongly encourage you to take advantage of the many resources available to assist you. Visit www.osha.gov/as/opa/foia/hot_11.html for more information.

Checklist for Good H.R.- Related Safety Practices

Note: Effectively communicating safety to your employees requires good human relations skills – particularly if you want your message to stick. This checklist, which includes questions you can ask yourself, was prepared by PLANET Safety Specialist Barb Mulhern and Bill Cook of Human Resource Associates.

- How good are your communication skills? Do you communicate often, on all safety issues, giving both feedback and follow-up?
- Do you know the safety issues specific to your industry, your company, and the safety record of each area and person in the company?
- Do you approach safety training by talking *at* your workers, *to* them, or *with* them?
- Have you taken the time to get to know your employees? If you have a worker who is worried about where he or she is going to sleep that night, you can't expect that person to "tune in" to your safety messages.
- If you are communicating to employees from different cultures, how well do you know their cultures? For example, framing safety messages in "family" terms to persons from most Hispanic/Latino cultures will have a greater impact than impersonal safety messages.
- Do you thoroughly understand the big picture? Being "people sensitive" is not enough.

More so than putting yourself in their shoes, put *them* in their shoes. This is about them! You need to be clear about your company's safety mission, and how both the employer and the employees fit in.

- How good are your listening skills? Do you *really* hear what your workers are saying? Or do you only hear what you want to hear? Make safety sessions more than one-sided "lectures." Ask, include, encourage.
- How well do you take criticism? If you present a new safety idea and ask for feedback, how do you react if employees think it's a bad idea?
- Are you able to enforce safety violations – even against an employee you "like" or have "empathy" for? Good human relations skills include not being one-sided, and not being one employee's "advocate" at the expense of the safety of *everyone* in the company.
- Do you lead by example? What message are you sending about your attitudes on safety? Remember that safety starts at the *top*. Being truly concerned about your employees' safety is a message that will come through loud and clear.

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