



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Safety Tips: Hedge Trimmer



In 2004 there were 4,000 injuries reported for hedge trimmer incidents. The majority of these were finger lacerations. Other injuries related to hedge trimmer use included electrical shock from cut cords and miscellaneous other types.

Hedge trimmers, electric and gasoline are wonderful labor-saving appliances compared to the old hand clippers that some of us were raised to use. Like all lawn and garden appliances, they are only as efficient and as safe as the user allows them to be (assuming he is focused on safe use). With spring and summer on us already, I think it is beneficial to offer a “heads up” on safety tips for the trimmers:

- ✓ **Read the Instructions before Use** – Before you start trimming or maybe lending your trimmer to a neighbor, read the instruction manual and caution the borrower to do the same.
- ✓ **Avoid use in Damp or Rainy Weather** – Refrain from trimming during wet or rainy conditions. It increases the chances of electric shock and malfunction of the tool.
- ✓ **Inspect Tool for Damaged parts or Cords** – Before each use, be sure to check all parts for damage and the cord for cuts, scrapes or frays. Replace with genuine parts or refrain from its use until it is repaired.
- ✓ **Wear Dust Masks, Safety Goggles and Gloves** – To prevent breathing in dust and fuel fumes, wear a dust mask. Safety goggles will protect your eyes from flying particles and debris. Wear gloves to protect your hands and for a better grip.
- ✓ **Ensure Tool is Switched off During Transport or Plugging in** - When you carry the trimmer, be sure that the switch is off and unplugged. To prevent accidental starting, never keep your hand or finger on the switch when the tool is not in use.
- ✓ **Never use a Hedge Trimmer with One Hand** - Always hold the trimmer with both hands when you’re trimming. You are putting yourself at risk with one hand by possible losing your grip.
- ✓ **Avoid Forcing the Tool on Tough Growth** - When you come upon tough or thick branches or limbs, don’t force the tool. You could cause a kickback or rebound and the result may be an injury.
- ✓ **Store in a Safe Place** – Refrain from storing the trimmer in an unsecured location where kids can get access to it. Store it in a clean, dry location.
- ✓ **Ensure that Blades are Sharp** – Sharp blades are important for maximum efficiency and safety during operation. Keep the blades clean at all times.
- ✓ **Unplug the Tool before Cleaning or Maintenance** – Be sure that the trimmer is unplugged before cleaning or performing routine maintenance.
- ✓ **Avoid overreaching and maintain a Steady Footing** – When operating the hedge trimmer, be sure to stand on a level, steady surface.

Wear slip resistant boots or shoes and avoid overreaching with the running tool in your hand.

- ✓ **Keep your hands away from the Blades** – Never try to clean out cut growth with the trimmer running. Do not attempt to hold growth in one hand and try to cut it with the trimmer in the other hand. Also, don’t attempt to hold the tool by the exposed blade or touch the blade when it is not in use.

GENERAL TIPS FOR GAS HEDGE TRIMMERS -

Some of the same rules apply for both electric and gasoline trimmers. Following are some tips for gasoline trimmers:

- Common to both electric and gas trimmers – Read and get totally familiar with the instruction manual for yourself, as well as if you are loaning it out to a friend.
- Before starting a project (with both types of trimmers) clear the area of children, adult bystanders and pets.
- Do not operate either type of trimmer under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- With a gas trimmer, carry it with the blades pointing backward, using the handle and avoid touching hot parts of the tool, like the muffler or gear box.
- When transporting a gas trimmer by a vehicle, be sure that it is secure to prevent turning it over and damaging it or experiencing fuel spillage.
- Do not re-fuel a hot engine - spilled fuel may start a fire. Be sure that the fuel cap is screwed as tightly as possible to prevent leaking.
- Start the gas engine at least 3 feet from the fueling spot.
- When working at heights -
 - ~Always use a lift bucket.
 - ~Never work off of a ladder or from a tree.
 - ~Never operate the trimmer with one hand.
- In addition to wearing goggles, gloves, and a dust mask, you should wear hearing protection.
- Before starting a project with both types of trimmers, check the material to be trimmed for wires, debris or other materials that might put in you in “harm’s way,” resulting in an injury.
- When you’re actually trimming hedges, refrain from trimming “blind.” Trim only areas that you can visibly see.
- Do not leave the trimmer running unattended. Always shut the engine off before leaving a trimming area.
- To avoid the potential for a fire, always keep various types of flammable debris cleaned off the hedge trimmer.

Hedge trimmers, in comparison to the old manual type, has untold advantages for efficiency and reduces fatigue factors. If you follow these tips noted above, trimming hedges can be a safe and healthy experience.

**SAFETY IS NOT AUTOMATIC-
THINK ABOUT IT!!**

ONLY FOOLS BREAK –

BREAK THE SAFETY RULES!!