

TIPS FOR THE SAFE OUTDOOR USE OF ELECTRICITY

WORKING IN THE YARD SHOULDN'T BE A SHOCKING EXPERIENCE

Most of us think that we know enough about electricity to stay safe. After all, we are surrounded by it and use it everyday. However, each year hundreds of people die, thousands are injured and millions of dollars in property damage are caused by electrical hazards that could have been avoided.

Whether you are just headed out to do a little work in the yard or are off to take on more ambitious outdoor projects, following these few tips can help protect you, your home and your family from harm.

Equipment Safety

- Inspect electric tools for damage to its cords, plugs and wiring. Take the tool to a qualified professional for repair.
- Protect yourself from injury. Turn the electric tool off, unplug it and put it in the "lock" position when carrying or connecting attachments such as mower baskets or saw blades.
- Never leave electric tools unattended where children or other unqualified adults can misuse it.
- Store electric tools indoors to keep them protected from damage caused by water and excessive heat.

Protect Yourself

- Safety devices on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.
- Invest in safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety equipment as recommended for each tool.
- Wear the appropriate clothes for the job.

Never Take Electricity For Granted

- A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) will automatically disconnect the power when an electrocution hazard exists.
- The National Electric Code now requires GFCIs in bathrooms, garages, kitchens and outdoor outlets.
- Protect outlets from the elements by making sure that they are covered when not in use.
- To help prevent electrical fires, keep dry leaves and other debris swept away from outdoor lighting, outlets and power cords.

Extension Cord Safety

- When working outdoors, use only weather-resistant heavy gauge extension cords marked "for outdoor use." These weather resistant cords have added safeguards designed to withstand the outdoor environment.
- Examine extension cords before each use. Damaged cords should be replaced immediately.
- Extension cords are for short term use and not for long term power solutions.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strands clear of snow and standing water, and well protected from the elements.
- Keep your work area clean and free from debris.

Power Line Safety

- Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when working near electrical wiring. Metal ladders conduct electricity and pose a threat of electrocution.
- Check surrounding work area to ensure that you will not accidentally come in contact with overhead power lines.
- Remember that power lines are underground as well. Before you dig to plant a tree or put in a fence, call 811 to mark all of the utility lines in your yard.

Generator Safety

- Never operate generators in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide very quickly, which can be deadly. Use carbon monoxide detectors in nearby enclosed spaces to monitor levels.
- Check carbon monoxide detectors (and smoke detectors) monthly to ensure they are working properly.
- Do not connect generators directly to household wiring without an appropriate transfer switch installed. Power from generators connected directly to household wiring can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them.
- Make sure your generator is properly grounded.
- Use a GFCI to help prevent electrocutions and electrical shock injuries.
- Keep the generator dry.
- Make sure extension cords used with generators are rated for the load, and are free of cuts, worn insulation, and have three-pronged plugs.
- Keep children away from portable generators at all times.

ESFI reminds everyone that electricity is a powerful tool. It can also be a lethal hazard. Better safety standards have reduced electrical hazards can cause deaths, injuries and/or property damage. However, good safety habits are still the best prevention against electrical hazards.

For additional electrical safety information, visit the Foundation's Web site at www.electrical-safety.org or call 703-841-3229.