

Don't Let Your Safety Be 'Gone With the Wind' Working Safely in Windy Conditions

By Shari Collins, Verdant Landscaping

March and April continue to be pretty windy months, which poses potential safety hazards to anyone working outdoors...especially landscapers. Working safely in windy conditions is a matter of common sense and following certain basic safety guidelines, such as these I have developed for my company.

Wind Safety on the Jobsite

First thing I would recommend is to not work outdoors if possible on very windy days, but that is not always practical. During January we had 14 days of consecutive winds. Most of us need to continue working to make a living. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind if you find you need to work outdoors on very windy days.



- Make sure all scaffolding is secure and cannot fall during a big wind gust.
- Be sure to wear eye protection – amendments, dirt, sand, etc. can get blown in eyes causing serious damage and/or even infections.
- Be sure to wear sunscreen. Sometimes when the wind is cooler, we may not feel hot, but the sun's rays are still beating down on our skin.
- Just like in the summer, these winter/spring winds can dry out our body systems. Take extra precautions to stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water and non-caffeinated drinks.
- Watch for electrical wires that may have come loose or blown down in working environments. Report them immediately.
- Stay clear of and do not work near large trees when it's windy. During large wind gusts limbs may break off causing injury to those below. Worse, the entire tree may be blown over and come crashing down on you or your unsuspecting crew-member.

- Because there are often flying objects during wind gusts, if you must work under these conditions, use a hardhat for extra protection.
- Change your planned work schedule on windy days. If you planned to spread amendments or do some spraying, reschedule that work for another day.
- Work on the less windy areas of the project, such as those protected by a home or building that block the wind.

- Wear a facemask to keep dust and other debris from getting in your breathing passages or lungs.
- Be sure to fasten ladders, pipe and landscape tools securely to your trucks and trailers before you set off from and to the jobsite.

These suggestions are just the start of a comprehensive safety program for your company. I have always found that the best piece of safety advice is to Use Common Sense...including when dealing with windy conditions in the workplace.

Wind Safety for Office, Home and Highway

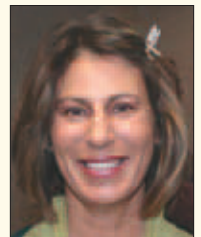
Of course when it's windy, it's not just windy on the job, but in everyday situations as well. Here are a few more safety tips for home, office and on the road when the wind picks up:

- Inspect your home or office for items that can move, fall or break and secure or remove these items before strong winds hit.
- If possible, bring pets inside, or at least put them in the garage or other shelter to protect them from the wind.
- Secure or stow lawn furniture, outdoor decorations, trashcans, hanging plants and anything else that can create a hazard or blow away.

- In high winds, blowing dust and sand may reduce visibility on the roadways. So slow down when driving and increase your following distance with vehicles in front of you.
- High winds may also cause vehicles – especially slab-sided vehicles – to swerve or even turn over when driving. Be extra attentive and try to stay clear of trucks and big rigs...especially going around curves.

Keep yourself and your crews safe during windy weather. And don't let a little wind blow a big hole in your company's safety record or your bottom line.

Shari Collins is the owner of Verdant Landscaping in Moorpark, California. She served as CLCA Ventura County Chapter President from 2006-2007, and continued as President in 2008 as the Ventura and Santa Barbara Chapters merged to become the Channel Islands Chapter. Presently, Shari serves as State Legislation Committee Chair and can be reached at (805) 552-9457.



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Safety Tips Wanted!

Do you have some safety tips that have made a difference for your company? Send them to LCIS at the address below, ATTN: Editor, and they might appear as future Safety Tips of the Month to share with your fellow CLCA members.

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