

## **Spring into Safety**

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With warmer weather and longer days approaching, people in our community are emerging from their winter cocoons to focus on long-neglected projects like spring cleaning, home repairs, and yard work. These activities can be extremely beneficial, but they also involve a variety of health and safety hazards that can be avoided with the proper precautions. To help ensure everyone in our community stays safe this season, the members of the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department offer the following tips and suggest you post them where they can be seen by your family members and co-workers.

### **Cleaning for Safety**

Nature is undergoing a fresh start and so are homeowners who are ready to clean up the debris that has been accumulating in basements, storage sheds, and garages.

- Household and pool chemicals, paints, and poisons should be properly marked and stored under lock and key, away from children's reach. Dispose of any that are leaking, expired, or that look bad.
- When cleaning up hazardous chemicals, wear rubber gloves and follow the safety directions on the packaging. Never mix chemicals in the same container. If you don't know how to dispose these items, contact Anoka County Hazardous Waste. Never put them into the trash or pour down the drain.
- Make sure gasoline and chemicals are well marked, stored in cool dry place away from the house and out of the reach of children and pets. Use only approved containers for gasoline storage.
- Never use gasoline to clean skin, clothes, auto parts, or floors.
- Clean up work areas. Put dangerous tools, adhesives, and matches and lighters away from children's reach or locked up.
- Check barbecue grills for leaks and cracks. Store any propane tanks away from the house and garage.
- Remove all fire hazards, including stacks of rags, newspapers, boxes, and magazines. Pay special attention to the spaces around the furnace, hot water tank, fireplace, space heaters, dryer, and under the stairs.

### **Yardwork Safety**

Itching to get the yard into shape for the summer? Here are ways to help ensure your spring spruce-up is disaster-free.

- Limber up. Yard chores may seem easy, yet they involve muscles that probably haven't used in a while.
- Always wear protective clothing when you handle pesticides and fertilizers.
- More than 60,000 people are treated in emergency rooms each year for lawn mower injuries.
  - Rake before you mow to prevent any stones and loose debris from launching into the air.
  - Never operate a mower in bare feet and avoid wearing loose clothing.
  - Never start a mower indoors.

- When refueling the mower, make sure the engine is off and cool,
- Don't spill gasoline on a hot engine and always avoid smoking around gasoline.
- Never leave the mower operational while unattended.
- Don't use electrical mowers on wet grass.

At least 55,000 people each year sustain injuries from trimmers, lawn edgers, pruners and power saws.

- When pruning trees, be careful not to let metal ladders or trimmers contact overhead wires.

### **Outdoor Safety**

Here are a few pointers.

- Springtime is severe weather time. If the skies look threatening, check to see if a storm watch or warning has been issued before you initiate outdoor activities. If you're already outside and thunderstorms threaten, go immediately into a building or enclosed vehicle. For tornadoes, go to the nearest safe structure, or the basement or interior first-floor room. If there's no time to follow these precautions, take cover in a ditch or depression in the ground.
- Avoid using appliance cords that are weathered or the insulation is gone.
- Have motion-detectors in the front and back of your home.
- Make sure your house numbers are easily seen from the street.
- Don't stack things up against your home. Keep them at least 6' from the structure.

### **Ladder Safety**

On the average, 145,000 people visit the emergency room each year, because of ladder mishaps. Safety tips you might remember:

- Inspect the ladder before using it to make sure there are no loose or broken rungs.
- Make sure the ladder is the right height for the job. Many accidents happen when people overextend their reach because the ladders are too short.
- Never stand on a ladder's bucket shelf.
- Make sure the ladder is completely open and that all the feet are planted on a firm, level surface. Extension ladders should not be placed at an angle that is too extreme.
- Avoid using a metal ladder near electrical sources.
- Face the ladder when climbing down and make sure your weight is centered between the two sides.

These are just a few precautions to consider when attempting all those springtime projects. This is also a good time to check the batteries in smoke alarms, make sure fire extinguishers are charged and are placed in proper locations around your home. Ensure you have a working flashlight and battery-powered radio for spring storms. By taking the right precautions, you and those around you can enjoy a safer springtime project completion.