

SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK - HEDGE CUTTERS

Prior to work commencement

1. Must be conversant in use of equipment to be used.
2. Ensure that machinery is in proper repair and working order before commencing work.
3. Must have PPE i.e. safety footwear, facemask or goggles, head protection, hearing protection, gloves, appropriate outdoor clothing.
4. Must have appropriate tools and equipment in good condition.
5. Consider risks and hazards in proposed work area to self and others, e.g. high work area.
6. Inspect work area before commencing, i.e. check for and remove debris etc.
7. Ensure familiarity with method statement for equipment and proposed work site.

Hazards to be aware of

1. Ejection of debris from machinery while cutting.
2. Handling of sharp items of litter and items with biohazard risks.
3. Slips and trips due to uneven or slippery ground.
4. Manual handling of equipment.
5. Contact with moving parts of machinery.
6. Contact with fuel and oils and plant materials.
7. Noise from machinery operations.
8. Repetitive strain injuries.
9. Exposure due to weather conditions.

Harm

1. Minor cuts, fractures, vibration problems, amputations to fatality, excessive blood loss, eye injuries, infection.
2. Allergic reactions to plants, hypothermia, heatstroke, sunburn, muscle strain.

Persons at risk

1. Operatives
2. Other persons in the vicinity of the work area, e.g. passers-by.

Control measures

1. Ensure children and animals are well away from the area where you are working or safely indoors.
2. Remember the Petrol is highly flammable. Always store fuel for your Hedge Cutter in an approved container and locked away until required for use. Never smoke when filling your Cutter with fuel, always make sure the engine is cold before refuelling. Refuelling a hot engine could cause a fire.
3. If you have a pacemaker consult your supervisor. The ignition system may produce a weak electromagnetic field which can interfere with some pacemakers. If you are in any doubt, consult your doctor.
4. Make sure you remove any obstacles or trip hazards along the line you will be cutting before you start.
5. Always hold the Hedge Cutter correctly and always use both hands.
6. If you have to remove jammed twigs or foliage from the blades, switch your Hedge Cutter OFF first.
7. Always wear safety glasses, goggles or visor. These are a vital piece of equipment, flying cuttings with thorns could lose you your sight – do not risk it.
8. Wear ear protection. Petrol hedge Cutters are noisier than their electric counterparts, ear defenders will protect your hearing.
9. If you have long hair, tie it back safely and neatly. Wear suitable clothing; do not have anything trailing like a belt or a scarf that could possibly get caught in the blades.
10. Wear safety shoes or boots; don't be tempted to wear sandals on a summer's day.
11. Ensure safety hand guard is correctly fitted. This will protect your hands from falling cuttings and, more importantly, from the blades.
12. Ideally, you should not use your Hedge Cutter above shoulder height and should use a sturdy platform to stand on.
13. If it is impossible to avoid working above your head use double position or long reach cutters that will give you an extended reach.

On completion

1. Inspect area covered to see if any hazards remaining to self and others
2. Transport cuttings etc to appropriate disposal point.
3. Clean machines. Arrange transport for tools and machinery to secure storage area.
4. Transport rubbish bags etc to appropriate disposal site.
5. Report completion to supervisor. Wash hands, arms etc thoroughly. Carry out personal inspection for cuts etc