EHSI Spotlight on Safety Inspections

For almost 15 years now, the Environmental Health and Safety Institute has been providing health and safety services for the NC Community College System. During that time, we have had the opportunity to visit every single site within the Community College network as we perform fume hood testing, IAQ assessments, and safety training. Perhaps one of the most important services EHSI offers is safety inspections of your campuses and centers. Requesting a safety inspection from EHSI is very easy and can save your college significant amounts of money that is often spent on workplace injuries and OSHA fines.

Did you know that all violations of OSHA’s Subpart S Electrical Safety Standard are considered by OSHA to be serious? Something as common as a missing ground pin from a vacuum cleaner plug or even a frayed electrical cord represents a serious risk of bodily harm or even death to the operator. These violations can also result in fines that can reach thousands of dollars. While performing safety inspections at your campus, EHSI places a special emphasis on locating cabinets, junction boxes, tools, and equipment that are not in compliance with the OSHA Electrical Safety Standard. Taking damaged equipment out of service and bringing electrical wiring systems up to code can save lives.

Another OSHA standard that EHSI pays special attention to is Subpart O Machinery and Machine Guarding. Community Colleges have a wide variety of tools and equipment from all types of industries. Bench grinders, table saws, metal lathes, and drill presses are just a few of the hundreds of different types of machines and equipment present on CC campuses that are covered by Subpart O. When machines are improperly guarded, or not guarded at all, they present a serious risk to the health and well-being of the operator. Many of these machines can cause life changing injuries if they are used improperly which is why it’s so important that they are inspected regularly. These violations can also rack up thousands of dollars in fines if discovered during an OSHA inspection.

It is my opinion that our primary obligation to the students, faculty, and staff is to provide the safest learning and working environment possible. By setting the standard for safety in the educational environment, NC Community Colleges can potentially have an impact on the overall health and safety in business and industries across NC. In most cases, the cost to correct the violations discovered during EHSI safety inspections is trivial when compared to the cost of just one serious OSHA violation. That said, the cost of one serious OSHA violation doesn’t even compare to the value of a person’s happiness and well-being who may have become severely injured while on the job. Be proactive! Protect your most valuable commodity—your PEOPLE! Contact EHSI today and schedule a safety inspection at your college. EHSI has the skills and experience to identify hazards in all of the areas of learning. Chemical, Electrical, Mechanical, Slip, trip, and fall hazards are present throughout your campuses and centers. Let us help you identify and eliminate or safely manage these hazards.

Contact Anne McKay at ehsi@blueridge.edu or 828-694-1767 to schedule a visit.
Powered Industrial Trucks (PIT) Practice and Training

Quick question... what’s the ninth most cited OSHA standard in fiscal 2014 (October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014)? Nope - not PITs! (Gotcha!) Machine guarding was in 9th place. PITs were the 5th most cited standard in 2014 (up from 6th in 2012). PIT citations are going in the wrong direction!

OSHA and the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that 85 workers are killed and 35,000 suffer serious injuries each year due to PIT accidents. When the new PIT standard went into effect in 1999 it was estimated that it would reduce deaths and injuries 20%. The PIT standard has met it’s goal but the number of deaths has remained fairly constant over the last few years (80 – 90). All safety professionals consider a fatality as unacceptable and always avoidable.

One of the most common OSHA citations for PIT’s is lack of training. Many employees get PIT training and evaluation and then don’t use a PIT for months.

Since a PIT handles and drives so much differently than other vehicles we use, they require practice. Most of us use our cars on a daily basis. That’s practice. But many employees use a PIT very infrequently and it is a very difficult piece of equipment to operate safely and well without a lot of practice.

So what are some possible solutions?
1. Have all PIT operators log some hours each month. This training and practice could help your frame of reference when you turn the steering wheel and the rear end swings out and hits something.
2. Have PIT operators train and practice on different types of PITs, work with different loads and physical hazards that may be encountered in transit and perform PIT inspections.
3. Observe operators to see in what areas they need additional training.
4. Ask the operators what they feel they need additional training on.

Practice and training will improve the operator’s skills and will make them safer operators.

New OSHA Reporting Requirements

Although we strive to have injury free workplaces, when serious accidents occur OSHA requires a prompt notification. Recent changes have taken effect. According to OSHA, beginning January 1, 2015, there is a change to what employers are required to report to OSHA. Employers are now required to report all work-related fatalities within 8 hours and all inpatient hospitalizations, amputations, and losses of an eye within 24 hours of finding out about the incident.

Previously, employers were required to report all workplace fatalities and when three or more workers were hospitalized in the same incident. The updated reporting requirements have a life-saving purpose: they will enable employers and workers to prevent future injuries by identifying and eliminating the most serious workplace hazards.

Employers will have three options for reporting these severe incidents to OSHA. They can call their nearest area office (Raleigh Area Office 919-779-8560) during normal business hours, call the 24-hour OSHA hotline at 1-800-625-2267, or they will be able to report online.

For more information and resources, visit OSHA’s website https://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping2014/index.html on the updated reporting.
Grounds maintenance is a field that consists of many different hazardous projects. Groundskeepers use various types of equipment and are exposed to a variety of hazards. Before any groundskeeper tasks are performed, the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used for each activity. Examples would be proper clothing to prevent injury from sun as well as bites and scratches, steel toe boots or at least high-top shoes to prevent injury to toes and ankles, face shields or goggles when necessary, ear muffs or plugs to prevent injury to hearing, and gloves to prevent injury to hands. Groundskeepers may operate many different types of equipment but before employees operate any equipment, they should be familiar with the owner’s manual for that equipment.

When using a blower, the operator should inspect the blower for any flaws. The blower should be kept in the upright position at all times. The tubing should be attached and never pointed at people, animals, glass or any hard surface that would allow particles to ricochet. Blowers should not be used from ladders, roofs, or unstable surfaces because the added weight could compromise the safety of the operator. Blowers should never be used to spread or disperse chemicals in any fashion. Chainsaws can present the most dangerous hazards of a groundskeeper’s employment. They should never be used in a casual manner because any mistake may cause serious injury. Proper PPE is vital in preventing injury. Chaps should be worn that will lock the chainsaw down rather than allowing the saw to cut into the flesh of the operator. A face shield will prevent litter or debris from contact with the eyes. The chain on the saw should always be kept sharp to minimize the risk of kick back. When starting the saw, the drop start method should never be used. While operating the saw, the operator should maintain balance and always use both hands to firmly control the saw.

Mowers should be inspected before operation. Hands and feet should never be placed near moving parts of the mower, and the discharge chute should never be pointed at people. When operating the mower, steep slopes should be avoided if possible but when mowing slopes, extra precaution should be taken to prevent roll-over accidents. Mowers should be driven up and down slopes rather than side to side.

Common sense should be used when fueling equipment. Fuel should be stored in proper location and fuel cans should be labeled to avoid using the wrong fuel for equipment. Equipment should be fueled outdoors to allow proper ventilation and away from electrical equipment. Also, employees should never smoke when handling fuel.

Groundskeepers usually work with a variety of chemicals, many of which can be very dangerous. For instance, when using weed killer, there are many potential hazards. The chemical should never be allowed to make contact with flesh and should never be sprayed in a manner that would allow pets or children to contact the chemical. It is very important that chemicals are properly labeled and stored to ensure that access is denied to anyone, such as children, who has no business with chemicals. SDS’s should be available in case of an emergency and an emergency phone number should be provided.

The hazards of a groundskeepers’ employment consist of much more than this article addresses. The concept of safety applies in most any activity performed by not only a groundskeeper, but anyone who takes on a project of any kind.
**ASK EHSI**

**Question:** What were the most cited OSHA standards in 2014?

**Answer:**
1. Fall protection (C)
2. Hazard communication
3. Scaffolding (C)
4. Respiratory protection
5. Powered industrial trucks
6. Lockout/tagout
7. Ladders (C)
8. Electrical: wiring
9. Machine guarding
10. Electrical: systems design

*C = Construction standard*

### EHSI SafetyNet Training Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-7</td>
<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogens</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-21</td>
<td>Groundskeeper Safety</td>
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<td>Hazard Communication &amp; Bloodborne Pathogens</td>
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<td>Arc Flash Safety</td>
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<td>7-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Safety Orientation for Custodians</td>
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