



SAFETY UNLIMITED, INC.

# Weekly Safety Meeting

## Pressure Washer Safety

There are many different types of injuries that can occur while using a pressure washer. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, an estimated 6,057 people went to an emergency room with injuries related to pressure washer use in 2018. While the pressure of the water can be considered the biggest exposure to risk during this work task, there are certainly many more hazards to be considered.

### **Hazards and Injuries Associated with Pressure Washing:**

- Hose/ connection failure;
- Flying debris;
- Strains/ sprains;
- Burns;
- Slips, trips, falls; and
- Lacerations/ bruises.

### **Safe Operations of Power Washers:**

- Supervisors must verify that operators are capable and qualified on each type of equipment before allowing the equipment to be operated unsupervised.
- The operator should make a visual inspection of work area prior to beginning work.
- Each operator must perform a pre-operational check of their equipment, as well as be familiar with the operator's manual.
  - Report needed repairs promptly.
  - Do not use any equipment that is unsafe. Do not fill the fuel tank while the engine is running.
- Be extremely careful not to point the power washer towards air hoses, safety lines, equipment or other personnel.
  - Remember that 0 degree and 15-degree tips force water at a velocity high enough to cut through concrete.
- Only the nozzle operator may direct the pump operator when to start the pump.

- Make sure safety chains are properly attached at connections and that all dead man shut-off valves work properly.
- Attach nozzles or accessories before turning on the water.
  - Never try to repair a leak in the hose while the system is under pressure.
- High pressure hoses should not be kinked.
  - Check hose fittings for proper connections.
  - Make sure all hoses and nozzles are in good shape.
  - Do not allow heavy equipment to run over hoses.
- Let the machine run for several minutes before starting to power-wash.
- Never leave equipment unattended with the engine running.
- Keep hands and feet clear of the cleaning nozzle at all times.
- Do not stand over hoses.
  - Watch for slipping/tripping hazards in the work area.
- Set the safety lock when the equipment is not in use.
- Turn off water at the source and bleed off pressure BEFORE disconnecting hoses.
  - Shut engine off when not in use.

### **Proper Operation of Power Washers:**

- Follow the equipment manufacturer's directions for distance between the spray head and the surface, typically 6" to 10"; this varies with the p.s.i. and spray width settings.
  - Moving too close may harm the surface; staying too far away may be ineffective.
- Consider using a special cleaning agent if the surface shows heavy mildew growth.
- When using an intake hose, make sure hose is not drawing mud, sand, or another bottom material into the pump system.
- Work from the top of the wall to the bottom; otherwise, dirt and mildew will run down over the already cleaned section.
- Direct the water at a downward arc when cleaning wood substrates.
  - Spraying wood head-on can damage the siding.
- Do not direct the spray upward when cleaning wood lap siding; this may damage the siding and cause leaks in the wall.
- Never leave the nozzle in a closed position more than a minute or two while the equipment is running; the pump may overheat.

- Do not spray stucco or masonry walls straight on.
  - The force of the spray can cause water to penetrate cracks in the walls and cause damage.

### **Summary:**

Consider all of the risks of pressure washing and what steps you need to take to protect yourself and others around you. While the main hazard considered is the pressure of the water, there are many more secondary hazards that could lead to the actual injury. What are some additional safeguards you can choose to use to help prevent an injury while using a pressure washer at home or work?

**YOUR BEST FIRST AID IS JOB SAFETY!!**

