IMCOM Safety Gram
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U.S.ARMY

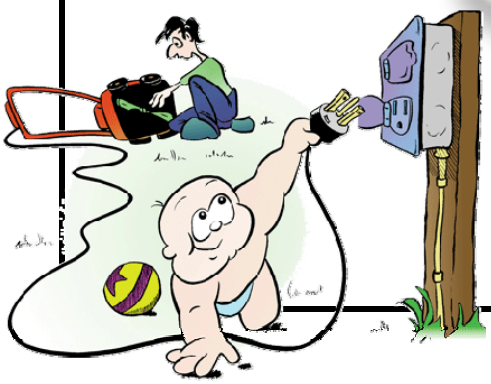
12-10 14 March 2012

Spring Cleaning

Spring is almost upon us. The days are getting longer and warmer. Spring's arrival means it is that time of year again when we seriously clean our homes. While this is a rewarding activity, it can also be a risky one. Falls, cuts, chemical burns, and electrical shock are just some of the injuries which can occur.

You can survive spring cleaning by following these safety tips.

- You probably have lots to do so plan your work carefully – don't try to do it all at once.
- It may not feel overly warm but that doesn't mean you cannot get a heat injury. Make sure you drink plenty of water. Also, don't forget the sunblock and wear a hat.
- Carefully inspect & repair lawn equipment and tools before using. Never lay hand tools such as rakes, hoes, shovels on the ground where they can be stepped on or tripped over.
- Wear protective clothing. Wear sturdy leather shoes, not tennis shoes, and safety glasses when operating mowers, edgers, trimmers, or other power tools. Wear vinyl or rubber gloves when you use liquid cleaning products. Cloth or leather gloves will protect your hands from minor injuries which can occur while you are dusting, moving furnishings, and handling debris.
- Beware of electrical hazards. Keep moisture away from electrical appliances and outlets. Don't spray cleaning products directly onto light switches or the fuse panel area of an electrical stove. Ordinary household vacuums must not be used on damp surfaces.
- Watch for overhead electrical hazards. Never touch a light fixture while you are on an aluminum ladder. When using an extension pole to clean ceilings or wash windows, stay away from lights and power lines.
- Slips, trips and falls are common household accidents, and they can occur easily when the house is in disarray during spring cleaning. Keep traffic areas clear of buckets, cords, boxes and other obstacles. Clean up spills promptly, and move carefully on damp surfaces. Look over your shoulder before you back up. Many housekeeping accidents happen as a result of tripping over objects or bumping into obstacles when backing up.
- Read the directions before using any cleaning product. When using the product, keep the work area well-ventilated. Many chemicals used for house cleaning can cause irritation to the respiratory system as well as burns to the eyes and skin. Never mix bleach and ammonia because this creates a deadly gas. Avoid using ammonia cleaning products in the bathroom at the same time as cleaning products containing bleach. Another way which this deadly mixture accidentally occurs is by pouring a bucket of ammonia cleaning product, which has been used for cleaning floors or windows, into a toilet bowl already containing a bleach product.
- Ladders are involved in many serious injuries at home. Inspect your ladders for wear and damage and secure them when in use. Place the base of the ladder on a solid, even surface. Do not stand on the top few rungs of a ladder. Do not lean away from the ladder because this can cause it to tip over.
- Use sturdy scaffolding and good sense when doing work at heights such as cleaning stairwell ceilings or second story windows. Consider hiring an expert for this kind of work.



- Use proper lifting techniques when moving bags of potting soil, fertilizer, mulch, decorative stone or paving blocks. Plan how you will pick something up and where you will set it down. Get help if necessary. Use the strength in your legs, not your back, to pick up a load. Bend your knees, and keep the load close to your body.
- Supervise children and keep cleaning chemicals and tools out of their reach.

Follow these suggestions this spring and year-round to prevent accidents while you are house-cleaning