



CompWest Loss Lessons: Stump Grinder

True Story

One day, an employer decided that a tree stump should be removed and rented a stump grinder to perform the task. While completing the stump removal process, a team member was inadvertently harmed when clothing got caught in the operational blade. Unfortunately, the employee suffered severe injuries.

The injured worker was transferred to the hospital for surgery and physical therapy was required. The damage caused by the stump grinder led to a life-changing injury.

Lessons Learned

The following contributing factors were discovered when reviewing the accident:

- No formal protocol was established for addressing non-routine tasks
- A stump grinding hazard risk assessment was not completed
- The supervisor was permitted to make a critical decision regarding renting the stump grinder without management/company oversight or approval
- Formal equipment-specific training was not provided for affected employees
- The crew did not review the manufacturer's safe operating instructions

Prevention Tips

Consider the following tips to reduce and eliminate injuries associated with new equipment and non-routine job tasks:

Company Policies and Management Approval

- Develop formal policies and procedures for performing non-routine job tasks and renting equipment

Perform Risk/Hazard Assessments for Non-Routine Job Tasks

Before undertaking unfamiliar job tasks, management should complete a risk assessment, which includes:

- Scope of the 'new task' to be performed
- Equipment needed to perform the task
- Hazards associated with job or equipment
- Controls required to mitigate and eliminate risks
- Necessary training
- Determine if the task could be more safely completed by an outside vendor

Equipment Specific Training for Employees

If the high-hazard task will be completed in-house:

- Mandate that documented safety training is provided on equipment hazards and controls
- Use the equipment manufacturer's operations manual to review safe operator instructions
- Complete a performance test to ensure the employee understands the hazards and controls
- Closely supervise employees until deemed proficient at new task and/or equipment operation

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. For further information, please contact your CompWest loss control consultant.

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