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SPRING CLEAN-UP SAFETY

Indoors:

- Recycle old newspapers, magazines and boxes. Clean closets and donate any unused clothing to your local charity along with furniture, toys or knick-knacks that are no longer in use.
- Spring cleaning often involves large cleaning projects. Exercise caution when using cleaning supplies. Read all instructions on labels and avoid mixing different cleaning agents because toxic fumes may result. Wear gloves to protect the hands and eye protection when using harsh cleaners. Store all cleaning products away from heat and out of reach of children. Consider storing cleaning products in a locked storage cabinet.

In the workshop:

- Keep work areas free from dust. Dust and shavings pose a fire hazard. Sweep up shavings or sawdust from workshop and garage areas.
- When working on a refinishing project using chemical strippers, take special precautions. Be aware that these products are flammable and/or hazardous to your health.
- Use only products that are marketed as paint or varnish strippers. Read and follow all label instructions and work in a well ventilated area.
- Wear chemical resistant gloves that are appropriate to the product that is being used. Ordinary latex kitchen gloves do not provide the protection needed for these chemicals. Always wash hands after using, even when wearing protective gloves.
- Wear protective goggles as these chemicals can cause serious, even permanent, damage to the eyes.
- Avoid working near any open flame and don't smoke — an explosion could result.
- Chemical soaked rags and any remaining chemicals will need to be disposed of separately from household trash. Contact your city government for the location of the nearest household hazardous waste disposal facility.

Outdoors:

- Whether you're using a riding lawn mower or a walk-behind mower, always read the operating instructions before starting. Never disable any of the machine's safety features.
- Know how to stop the machine quickly. Make sure that the blade-stopping feature is working properly. Never leave a running mower unattended.
- Clear the area you're going to mow before you begin. Walk around the area and pick up any toys, branches or rocks. The high speed of the mower's or trimmer's blade produces a vacuuming action that draws grass up to be cut. This action can also pick up debris and throw it out of the discharge area with considerable force. Children



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should be kept away from the area when you're mowing.

- Never allow children to operate a mower, whether it is a walk-behind or riding mower. Manufacturers recommend that only mature adolescents should operate a mower and then only under adult supervision.
- Wear the appropriate clothing when mowing or trimming grass. Always wear sturdy footwear. Be aware that loose clothing and jewelry may get caught in moving parts and lead to serious injury. Eye and ear protection are recommended.
- Use caution when mowing on slopes. When using a walk-behind mower mow across the face of the slope; when using a riding mower always mow up and down - never across - on slopes over 5 degrees. This reduces the risk of tipover or loss of control. If you have concerns about tipping or losing control on a slope, stay off and don't mow.
- Use extra care when re-fueling your machine. Use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. To avoid fire, the engine should be turned off and cool before re-fueling. Re-fuel your machine outdoors. Clean up any spilled gasoline immediately.
- Brush cutters and chainsaws are also increasing in popularity. These blades are sharp and, because of the nature of items being cut, can be unpredictable. Only mature adults should operate these tools. As with any power tool, read and follow all operating instructions.
- Choose the right size chainsaw for the types of jobs you do. Any saw with a blade length longer than 20" should only be used by professionals. The saw should feel balanced and comfortable for the operator.
- Electric saws are becoming more popular for household use. Be sure that the power source is grounded and adequate to power the saw.
- Keep your saw in proper working order. Make sure the chain is sharpened and the tension is properly adjusted.

About ladders

Indoors and out, ladders play a major role in any spring cleaning job. Every year thousands of people are injured in falls involving ladders. Make sure yours is up to the task.

- Before using your ladder, inspect it for any loose or damaged hinges, steps or braces.
- Select the proper ladder for the job. Make sure it's long enough and sturdy enough for its intended purpose. Be aware of power lines when using metal ladders. Metal is a prime conductor of electricity and you can be killed by touching a ladder that has come in contact with power lines.
- Place the ladder on a solid, level surface. If using outdoors on soft ground, spread planks under the ladder's legs.
- Face the ladder and use both hands when climbing or descending. Try not to lean too far to either side — a good measure is to keep your belt buckle between the two rails. If you need tools for the job, either wear them in a tool belt, put them in your pockets, or use a bucket and rope to haul them up. When possible have someone help steady the ladder.



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