

Safety Note #29

HIGH-PRESSURE WASHER SAFETY



Photograph Courtesy of West Side REC

Data available from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) indicate approximately 3,100 people were treated in hospitals for high-pressure washer injuries during 2003. Approximately 20 percent of the injuries were chemical burns to the eyes and about 15 percent were lacerations to fingers and hands. Other injuries include thermal burns to hands, back and shoulder strains, and various types of contusions. Information published by CPSC (Document #5069) indicates 13 high-pressure washer fatalities have occurred due to electrical shocks.

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the high-pressure washer operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect the high-pressure washer for damage or disrepair and assure all hoses are intact and connected properly. Inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.
- If a high-pressure washer fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the washer from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.

Operating Precautions

- Always wear safety glasses or goggles when using a high-pressure washer.
- Attach hoses and turn on the water before starting a high-pressure washer.
- Insert three-pronged high-pressure washer plugs into receptacles with similar prong patterns.
- Maintain a distance from 8 to 24 inches between the spray-wand nozzle and surface being cleaned.
- Never point the high-pressure spray wand at another person.
- High-pressure washers develop pressures from 1,000 to 4,000 psi at the spray-wand nozzle. At these pressures, washer fluids could be inadvertently injected into the skin.
- Keep hands and feet away from the spray-wand nozzle.
- Be aware of the work environment and keep high-pressure spray away from electric wiring, receptacles, or junction boxes.
- High-pressure washer detergents can be caustic. Avoid contact with the eyes or skin.
- After turning a high-pressure washer off, pull the spray-wand trigger to release water pressure in the hose.
- Never repair a damaged high-pressure hose. Always replace it.