



06-19 Hedge Trimmer Safety Module



An OPRD Gasoline
Hedge Trimmer

About Hedge Trimmers

- Well maintained and shaped hedges and shrubbery can beautify any park, adding a touch of sophistication, beauty and class.
- Park hedges, shrubs and bushes are often cut with a powered hedge trimmer. The power source can be gasoline or electricity. The gas tend to be more powerful but can be heavier and more difficult to start. The electric tend to be lighter and less powerful.
- The type you need will depend on the job.

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Types of Hedge Trimmers

- **Gas Powered**



- **Electric**

- 110V



- Battery



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Types of Hedge Trimmers

- **Pole Trimmers**

- Trimmers with an extendable pole can be more dangerous to operate due to the weight of the blade when extended and can be harder to control.



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Choosing a Hedge Trimmer

What sort of job do you need to do? Will you be trimming high, low or long hedges? Will you be shaping the hedge or shrub?

- The double-sided or dual hedge trimmer has reciprocating cutting blades on both sides of the cutter, and is designed for trimming hedges up to chest height.
- Most are equipped with an adjustable rear handle for increased flexibility and for better ergonomics when trimming the sides of hedges.
- For shaping hedges, the double-sided trimmer is the most suitable.

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Choosing a Hedge Trimmer

- Pole hedge trimmers are used for cutting high hedges and shrubs; or wide, low hedges difficult to get around, or ground cover if a weed eater/ grass trimmer is unavailable.
- A pole hedge trimmer allows you to cut high hedges without a ladder. Because you can angle the cutting bar you can work more quickly and it's easier to reach high or difficult locations.
- The engine acts as a counterweight to the cutting bar, so the machine remains well balanced while you work.

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Shore Acre's hedges and shrubs, lighted for the annual Holiday Lights Event

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Pre-Operation

- The hedge trimmer is extremely dangerous. It's designed to cut through branches the width of your finger and when used carelessly can cause severe accidents.
- It is one of the leading causes of home owner visits to emergency rooms!
- **Read the manual first.**
The manufacturer will know best how their product should be used to ensure safety.

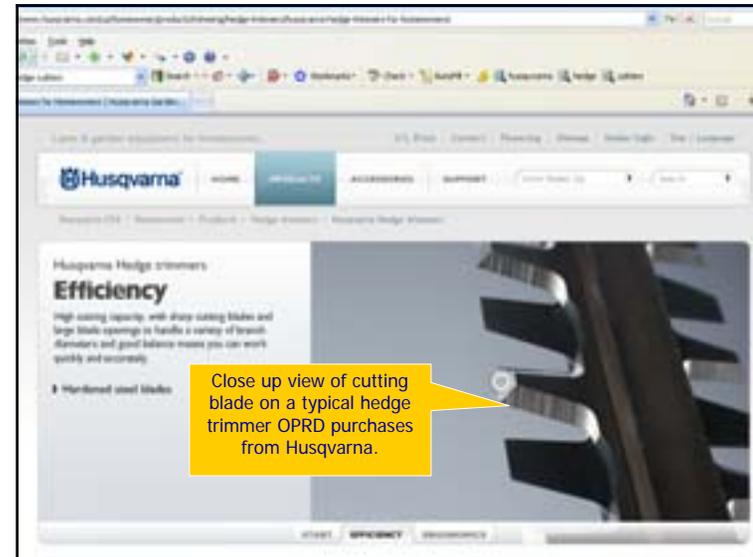
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Pre-Operation

Inspection/ Service

- Fill fuel tank with correct gasoline mixture if a two cycle engine. NOTE: Fuel mixes will stay fresh up to 30 days. DO NOT mix quantities larger than what is usable in a 30 day period.
- Check all nuts and bolts and become familiar with how to adjust the handles and cutting angle.
- Check condition and movement of cutting blades. Blade should slide back and forth freely.
- A sharp trimmer will cut better and is safer than a dull one.

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Pre-Operation

- Check that the spark plug boot is securely on the spark plug. A loose boot may cause arcing that could ignite combustible fumes or cause a fire, and will not allow the trimmer to run properly.
- Make sure the handles are clean and dry, free from dirt or oil so your gloves will not slip.
- Pre-start and check out all types of trimmers before leaving the shop.
- The starting method for gasoline trimmers differs depending on whether the engine is cold or warm and the specific type of trimmer.

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Pre-Operation

- **Starting the Gas Powered Trimmer.**
 - Place the trimmer on level ground and ensure that no objects or obstructions are in the immediate vicinity that could come in contact with the blades.
 - Hold the front handle firmly with your left hand and put your right foot onto the base of the rear handle.
 - Pull cord with right hand.
 - Check idle speed. The blades should not run at this speed.

NEVER Drop start the trimmer!

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Pre-Operation

- For easier operation and longer blade life, lubricate the hedge trimmer before and after each use. Stop the engine and disconnect the spark plug wire. Lay the hedge trimmer on a flat surface. Apply light weight machine oil or resin solvent along the edge of the top blade. Run engine briefly to work in oil.
- Many new hedge trimmers are designed with safety devices so they only move the cutting blades when both of the operator's hands are on the handles. Check the hedge trimmer before each use to ensure all of the safety features are operational.

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Pre-Operation

- Set adjustable handles for a comfortable fit, and so the blade is in the proper aspect for the task at hand.
- Become familiar with features. Many models are equipped with a Lock-on switch for continuous running and a Lock-off switch to prevent accidental starting.
- **Red Tag (Lockout/ Tagout) the trimmer if it will not start or should not be used.**

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Pre-Operation

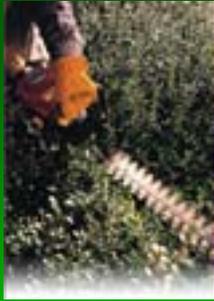
- Before you leave the shop, install the protective scabbard over the blade. Anytime it is not in use, you should have it installed to protect yourself and the blades.
- Properly secure the trimmer in the vehicle to prevent turnover, fuel spills or damage.
- Always look for fuel spillage during filling and when in operation. Do not start or run the engine until the leak is fixed.

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Operation

- **Site Assessment**
 - Before you begin, look around the hedge and remove any hidden wires, cords, twine, toys, metal posts, etc.
 - If cutting close to the ground, look for rocks or dirt
 - Remove debris or equipment that could trip you as you work.
 - If the hedge is wet, or the ground is slippery, ask your manager to delay the task until conditions are safer. Wet debris will stick in the cutting bars, and if you slip or fall serious injury could occur. It also may present an electrical hazard for electric hedge trimmers.

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Operations



- Bystanders, especially children, and animals should never be allowed in the area where a hedge trimmer is in use. Stop work until they pass by, or the area is safe to work in.
- The National Safety Council suggest all bystanders, children, and pets should be at least 50 ft. away.

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Operation

- **Personal Protection Equipment**
 - Wear safety glasses or eye protection
 - Wear hearing protection
 - Wear heavy duty, non-slip gloves



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Operation

- **Clothing**
 - Wear long pants
 - Wear sturdy shoes or work boots
 - It may be appropriate to wear a dust mask to prevent inhalation of debris or dust.



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Operation

- Never wear loose fitting clothing or short pants.
- Keep a firm footing and balance.
- Do not overreach. Overreaching can result in loss of balance or exposure to hot surfaces.
- Never cut any material over 3/8 in. diameter.
- Do not operate in poor lighting.

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Operation

- Never trim above your head unless you are using a pole trimmer. Trimming over your head with a standard hedge trimmer will put you at a greater risk of accident.
- If you have to trim up high with a standard hedge trimmer, then make sure that you have a ladder and you are trimming below your head.
- Someone may be required to stabilize the ladder since many tasks will be on soft or uneven ground.

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Operation

- Work slowly and deliberately. Plan your cuts before you make them.
- Take an occasional rest break to avoid fatigue.
- Stop the engine or unplug electric models before cleaning or adjusting.
- Never leave the trimmer unattended, to prevent children playing with it.

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Operation

- **CUTTING TIPS**
 - Do not attempt to cut stems or twigs that are larger than 3/8 in. thick, or those obviously too large to feed into the cutting blade. Use a hand saw, loppers or pruning saw to trim large stems.
 - If making radical cuts to severely cut back a hedge, cut a little at a time, in several passes.
 - Cut sides of hedges first, then the top.
 - Make vertical cuts by swinging the blade up and down in an arc, as you move along the hedge. Use both sides of the cutting blade.

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Operation

- **CUTTING TIPS, Continued**
 - On horizontal cuts, swing the blade in an arc towards the outside of the hedge so the cuttings are swept on to the ground.
 - Use a string to help cut your hedge level. Stretch a piece of string along the hedge at the desired height. Trim the hedge just above the guide line of string.
 - Trim the side of a hedge so that it will be slightly narrower at the top. More of the hedge will be exposed when shaped this way, and it will be more uniform.

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Dangers Associated with Gas Powered Trimmers

- Gas powered trimmers are heavy and may cause operator fatigue. Fatigue is a leading cause of operator accidents.
- Vibrations can cause an improperly tightened fuel cap to loosen or come off and spill fuel. In order to reduce risk of fuel spillage and fire, tighten fuel cap as firmly as possible
- Do not fuel a hot engine - fuel may spill and cause a fire
- Do not touch the area around the muffler or cylinder of the unit; these parts get hot from operation.

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Dangers Associated with Electric Trimmers

- Always pay attention to where the cord is so that it does not get cut by the trimmer blades
- Always use GFCI grounded outlets and a heavy duty, 3 wire extension cord that is in excellent condition and moisture resistant.
- Never operate them in wet conditions
- Do not cut the cord, or an electric shock may occur



Dangers Associated with Electric Trimmers

- Start your trimming close to your power source and work away, allowing the cord to trail behind you and not get underfoot.
- Sometimes branches can get jammed in the blade. Be sure the power is off and the trimmers unplugged before attempting to remove branches manually.

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Hedge trimmer accidents most often occur when the operator —

- Attempts to clear debris, or move the cord away from the blade while it is running.
- Trips or falls and catches the trimmer by the moving blade, or moves the blade into body.
- Pulls the trimmer through the hedge by the cord, and causes the switch to trip to the On position while holding the blade end.
- Fails to use a heavy duty 3 wire extension cord with a properly grounded 3 prong plug in.

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Hedge-trimmer accidents most often occur when the operator —

- Changes hand positions while the trimmer is running and reaches into the cutter,
- Uses a trimmer with only one handle or holds a two-handled trimmer with one hand, or
- Falls from a ladder or chair while trimming a shrub or hedge.
- Uses a trimmer with dull blades that catch on debris and make incomplete cuts.

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Hedge-trimmer accidents most often occur when the operator —

- Fails to wear goggles and swats at a fly or mosquito, or gets a piece of debris in the eye.
- Fails to wear appropriate foot gear (barefoot or sandals!)
- Fails to stop blade when finishing a downward cut and then moves forward to make another cut.

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What Could Happen

- **Keep hands away from blade**



- Fingers can be lopped off in the trimmer blades.
- The US Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates over 7,000 people a year receive emergency room treatment for hedge trimmer accidents.

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Carbon Monoxide Hazard

- As with any gasoline powered equipment, the exhaust of a gas powered hedge trimmer contains deadly carbon monoxide
- Never operate a gas powered hedge trimmer indoors. Breathing carbon monoxide can cause serious or fatal injuries



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Raynaud's Syndrome and Trigger Finger

- This condition can occur from prolonged exposure to cold and/or vibrations. This condition affects the hands and arms, causing tingling, burning, numbness, and loss of color in the fingers. Trigger fingers can actually freeze the fingers in a set position.
- Avoid awkward grips on the hedge trimmer that may cause stress. Maintain control, but do not hold the unit with an excessively tight grip. Take breaks and stretch out your fingers and wrists!



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Physical Condition while Operating

- Operating a hedge trimmer while impaired can result in serious personal injury or death to yourself or others.
- Never operate a hedge trimmer if you are fatigued or under the influence of alcohol, medication, or other substances



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Post Operation

- **Clean up, Hazard warning and Storage**
 - Clean up the area where you were working and dispose of debris properly.
 - Put a light coat of machine oil or resin solvent on blade and work it back and forth a couple of times to work the oil/solvent into the cutting edges.
 - Clean and inspect trimmer and electric cord for damage, warping or needed maintenance.
 - Red Tag any equipment or cords as appropriate.
 - Store fuel in flammables shed or other approved area.

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TEST!



- **You now need to take a proficiency test to ensure you understand how to operate a hedge trimmer safely.**

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PROFICIENCY TEST

HEDGE TRIMMERS

03-10T

Multiple Choice (Choose only one answer on each question):

1. Pole trimmers are used for:
 - a) Cutting high hedges or shrubs.
 - b) Cutting low, wide hedges difficult to get around.
 - c) Cutting weed eaters and grass trimmers left in the ground cover
 - d) All of the above
 - e) A and B only.

2. Pre-Operational checks include:
 - a) Spark plug boot fits tight on plug
 - b) Handles clean, no oil or dirt
 - c) Blade moves freely and sharp
 - d) Correct fuel mixture on hand
 - e) Start before leaving shop
 - f) All the above

3. To properly lubricate the blade and extend its life:
 - a) Stop engine and disconnect spark plug boot.
 - b) Lay trimmer on flat surface
 - c) Apply light weight oil or resin solvent
 - d) Run engine briefly
 - e) All of above
 - f) B, C and D only

4. A site assessment requires:
 - a) Remove wires, toys, metal posts, etc. in hedge
 - b) Look for rocks and dirt mounds at bottom of hedge
 - c) Remove equipment or debris that create unsafe conditions
 - d) Water hedge so it will cut better
 - e) A, B and C only

5. Proper Personal Protection Equipment and Clothing includes:
 - a) Loose fitting clothing, sandals and short pants to keep cool.
 - b) Long pants, sturdy work boots and a particulate mask if dusty.
 - c) Safety glasses or shield, hearing protection and heavy duty, non-slip gloves
 - d) B and C only.

6. When operating the trimmer:
 - a) Do not attempt to cut branches or stems larger than 3/8 inch.
 - b) To make radical cuts, cut a little at a time, in several passes.
 - c) Cut sides first, then the top
 - d) On horizontal cuts, swing the blade in an arc towards the outside of the hedge.
 - e) All of the above

7. Post Operation clean up and storage requires the operator to:
 - a) Clean up the work area and properly dispose of debris
 - b) Put a light coat of oil or resin solvent on the blade, then install scabbard.
 - c) Store flammable fuel mixtures in the booth so rangers will know where it is.
 - d) All of the above
 - e) A and B only.

8. Hedge trimmer accidents most often occur when the operator:
 - a) Attempts to clear debris or move the cord when the blade is cutting.
 - b) Slips, trips, falls or moves into the blade while it is cutting.
 - c) Uses a heavy duty, 3 wire extension cord and grounded plug in correctly.
 - d) Trimmer agitates insects, that sting operator, or throws debris in eye
 - f) All of the above
 - g) A, B and D

True/False:

9. _____ The double sided or dual cutting hedge trimmer has reciprocating cutting blades on both sides of the cutter so you can cut in either direction.
10. _____ Almost no one goes to the emergency room for hedge trimmer accidents.
11. _____ The best way to start a gasoline trimmer is to drop start it.
12. _____ Typical Gasoline/ Oil fuel mixes are good for 180 days.
13. _____ Anytime you are not using the trimmer install the scabbard to protect yourself and the cutting blades.
14. _____ When moving to the work site, just put the trimmer in the back of the rig. The air tight gas cap will prevent any leakage and the trimmers are really rugged.
15. _____ The National Safety Council recommends all bystanders, children and pets be at least 5 feet away from a working trimmer.
16. _____ Gas powered trimmers can vibrate so much that improperly tightened fuel caps can loosen or come off and spill fuel.
17. _____ Wet, cold, nasty weather is good for using a trimmer because the blades cut cleaner and debris just flies off the hedge.
18. _____ To prevent Raynaud's Syndrome and Trigger Finger, avoid awkward grips, or excessively, tight grips. Since you must grip firmly enough to maintain control, take frequent breaks and stretch out your fingers and wrists.

Employee Name: _____ Pass _____ No Pass _____

Date: _____

Take this test to your supervisor or trainer for sign off.