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Keep It Safe

Spring Chore Tips

After spending long winter days indoors, most folks love to get outside in spring, even if just to do chores. But outdoor chores can bring electrical hazards.

For example, ladders contacting power lines cause 9 percent of electrocution-related deaths each year, according to recent data from the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Landscaping, gardening and farming equipment cause another 7 percent.

To avoid electrical hazards, the CPSC and Electrical Safety Foundation International suggest you and your family follow these simple tips:

- Use only a fiberglass or wooden ladder if you must work near overhead wires.
- Inspect power tools and appliances for frayed cords, broken plugs, and cracked or broken housing. Repair or replace damaged items.
- Store power tools indoors.
- Unplug outdoor tools when not in use.
- Do not carry power tools by the cord.
- Avoid damp conditions when using electricity. Keep all electrical devices and cords away from water. Place waterproof covers on all outdoor outlets.
- Install ground-fault circuit interrupters in outlets where water may be nearby.
- Only use extension cords marked for outdoor use. Match power needs of an electric tool or appliance to the cord's label information.
- Never touch a person or an object that has made contact with a power line.
- Dial 811, the national Call Before You Dig phone number, at least 72 hours before engaging in any type of excavation work. Local utilities will be notified to mark the approximate location of any underground lines on your property.
- Teach children to stay away from electric transformers and substations, and explain what posted warning signs mean. ■

