

# Line Trimmer Safety

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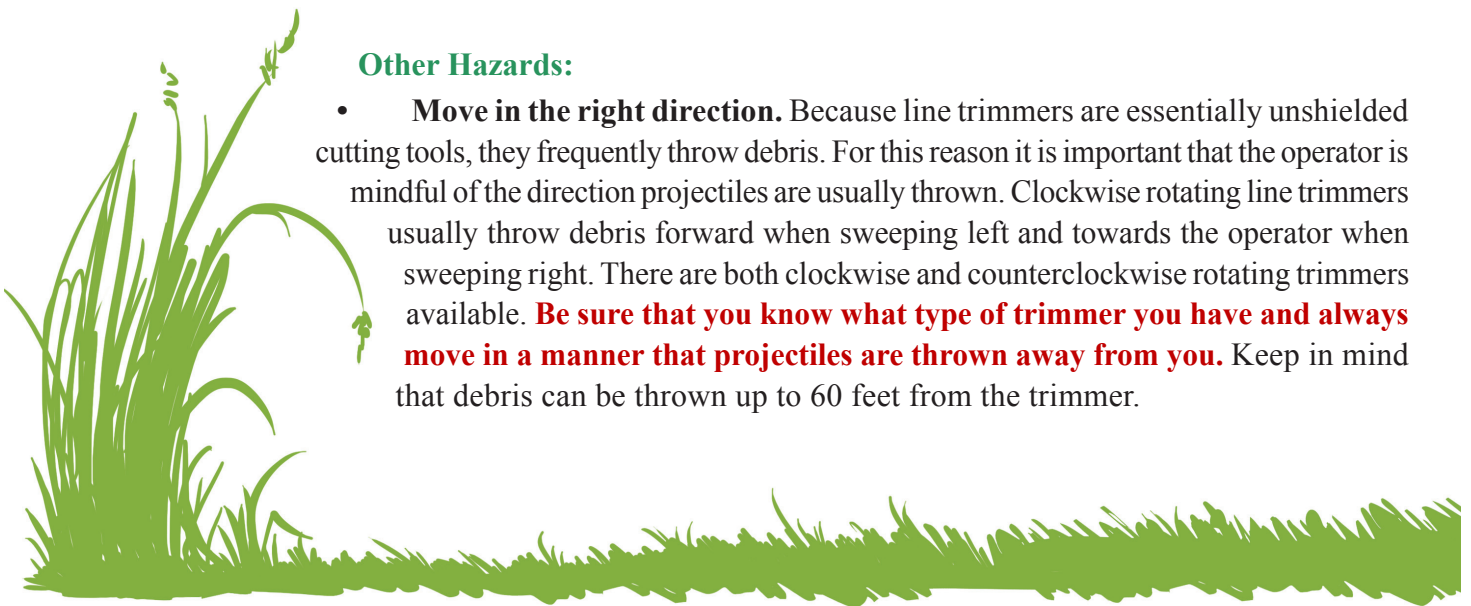
Line trimmers, more commonly known as weed eaters, are a necessity for most municipalities and utilities and – because they're used frequently – the improper operation of this particular tool is responsible for many workers compensation and property liability claims. As with all tools and equipment, proper training on how to use trimmers as well as the hazards associated with using trimmers should take place. Following appropriate safety procedures along with careful equipment operation helps manage risks and minimize the chances of employee injury.

## Personal Protective Equipment:

- **Eye Protection** – Unlike mowing equipment, which has an enclosed blade, only a small portion of the trimmer's head is shielded. Trimmers regularly throw sand, gravel and other debris away from the trimmer. **Safety glasses that meet or exceed ANSI Z87.1 specifications should be worn whenever a line trimmer is in use.**
- **Clothing** – Projectiles from the trimmer may result in lacerations or other injuries as well as exposure to harmful plants such as poison ivy. **Wearing long pants will protect your legs from debris be projected from the trimmer. Never wear shorts while operating line trimmers.**
- **Footwear** – **A good sturdy work boot (preferably leather) should be worn when using line trimmers.** The line from the trimmer can easily cut through softer material such as that found on tennis shoes. Boots not only help protect your feet from injury but also provide sure footing for the operator.
- **Hearing Protection** – When used over an extended period of time, the sound emitted from trimmers can cause damage to your ears. **Ear plugs or ear muffs should be worn when operating trimmers.**

## Other Hazards:

- **Move in the right direction.** Because line trimmers are essentially unshielded cutting tools, they frequently throw debris. For this reason it is important that the operator is mindful of the direction projectiles are usually thrown. Clockwise rotating line trimmers usually throw debris forward when sweeping left and towards the operator when sweeping right. There are both clockwise and counterclockwise rotating trimmers available. **Be sure that you know what type of trimmer you have and always move in a manner that projectiles are thrown away from you.** Keep in mind that debris can be thrown up to 60 feet from the trimmer.



- **Be mindful of your surroundings.** While using line trimmers, pay attention to what you are cutting and what is going on around you. This is especially important near parks, playgrounds, or other occupied areas. **Avoid trimming when people are within 60 feet of the work area.**
- **Trimming near roadways.** Working on or near the roadway is always a dangerous task. Appropriate PPE such as brightly colored vests should be worn and proper signage should be used to alert drivers that workers are nearby. While operating a line trimmer near the roadway, the operator should always pay attention to drivers as the driver could be distracted. **Always suspend trimming as vehicles travel by to prevent property damage from thrown debris.**
- **Watch for poison ivy, insects, snakes, and other hazards.** When trimming along wooded areas, nature trails, roadsides or even parks, it is not uncommon to come in contact with poison ivy, poison oak or other allergens. Respiratory protection should be worn by those who are sensitive to these substances. We all know that poisonous snakes are dangerous for everyone; however, bees, wasps and fire ants can be just as dangerous to those who are allergic. Pay attention to your surroundings and avoid these hazards when possible. **First aid kits should be available to your employees and those with severe allergies should seek medical attention when exposed to these types of hazards.**

