

## Landscape Safety Series: Using Trenchers Safely<sup>1</sup>

Lance Fluegel and Bradley Rein<sup>2</sup>

### BEFORE USING THE TRENCHER

- Read the operator's manual before attempting to operate the machine. Be sure you understand it completely.
- Dress properly for the job. Wear snug-fitting, sturdy pants and shirt, safety shoes, safety helmet, safety goggles or screen, and hearing protection.
- Check the machine for loose, missing, or broken parts. Tighten, repair, or replace as needed before using.
- Check all safety devices such as seat belts, roll-over protective structures (ROPS), shields, warning lights, etc., to see that they are in place and working.
- Read and heed the safety warning decals on the machine.
- Check for hydraulic leaks with a piece of wood or cardboard. Never use your hand as pinpoint leaks can penetrate the skin.
- When checking radiator coolant, cover the cap with a cloth to protect yourself from escaping steam. Open the cap slightly to release pressure, and then open the rest of the way. Allow engine to cool before adding any needed coolant.
- Fill the fuel tank with engine stopped and cool. Do not smoke. Be sure there are no sparks or open flames nearby. If you must refuel during operation, allow the engine to cool a few minutes before doing so.
- Check for underground utilities in the digging area. You should request Blue Stake service at least two days in advance of digging. Don't take chances. You could lose your life if you strike a gas or electric line.

- Check for the presence of overhead utility lines as they can be equally as dangerous.

### OPERATING THE TRENCHER

- Use care when mounting riding trenchers. Be sure your hands and shoes are clean and dry. Use the handrails, not control levers, to guide yourself.
- Fasten the seat belt and adjust the seat to a comfortable position.
- Warn others away from the machine and work area especially children and pets.
- Be sure the transmission and other controls are in the neutral position. Set the brakes on all models.
- Start the engine and test all controls.
- Lower the trencher boom within a few inches of the soil.
- Engage the chain at slow speed. Be sure you can control the trencher as the chain can jerk the machine quickly.
- Operate riding trenchers only from the seat. Keep hands and feet clear of chain and augers on walk-behind models.
- Use caution when operating on slopes as the machine will want to work down the slope.
- Never make sharp turns while digging.
- Never adjust or attempt to free a jammed chain while it is running. Always stop the machine and engine first.
- Trenchers are one person machines -- never allow any riders.
- When raising the boom you should disengage the chain just as it clears the trench.
- Follow these steps when shutting the machine down for any length of time:

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1. Lower the trenching boom and attachments to the ground.
2. Set the parking brake or block the wheels.
3. Put the transmission in park or neutral.
4. Stop the engine.
5. Cycle the hydraulic controls to relieve any pressure.
6. Remove the ignition key.
7. Dismount carefully using steps and handholds.

## **TRANSPORTING TRENCHERS**

- Follow the manufacturer's manual for specific loading and unloading procedures.
- Be sure all required tie downs, safety chains, etc., are properly secured.
- If driving the trencher on public roads make certain that all warning signs, lights, and flags are in place and visible. The Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem must be visible to vehicles approaching from the rear.