Nuisance Vegetation

(Safety Brief)

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PACIF has developed Safety Briefs to help municipal highway supervisors maintain a high level of safety and hazard awareness among employees. We recommend using these short "tailgate trainings" on a regular basis – and **at least once a month**. If you need a particular safety topic, please contact us at losscontrol@vlct.org.

Information for Supervisors

During summer months, highway crews often engage in roadside mowing, weed trimming and highway right-of-way maintenance. When performing these tasks, employees may be exposed to plants that can cause chemical burns and serious skin irritation. The most common plants that pose hazards to workers include: poison ivy and wild parsnip. Other plants that also pose problems but are less commonly encountered include poison oak, poison sumac, and giant hogweed. To avoid injury, it is important that employees be able to identify these plants, use the proper protective equipment and follow proper procedures for the cleanup of plant residues.

Talking Points for Training

Teach your employees how to identify these common roadside plants. A quick search on the internet can provide you with pictures, physical descriptions and locations where the above listed plants are often found. It will be helpful to print out pictures in color and review them with your employees when you give this "safety brief" training. Make sure employees can identify the plants, and understand these basic work practices and protection measures:

1. Identify where the plants are before starting work so that the right PPE and work practices can be used for the task.

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2. Prevent exposure by wear proper clothing when contact is expected. As a minimum, wear long sleeves, long pants, boots, eye protection, and gloves.
3. Avoid contact with the juice or sap from these plants as much as possible. Avoiding all contact is preferred.
4. Recognize that tools and equipment that have come into contact with the plant residues are sources of exposure to the plant residue. Wash these with water and avoid skin contact. Rubber or similar gloves should be used for washing tools and should be thoroughly rinsed or discarded after use.
5. If exposed skin comes into contact with the sap or plant residue, wash the skin thoroughly with soap and water as soon as possible. If employees are exposed to Wild Parsnip or Giant Hogweed, it is also helpful to keep the affected skin area out of the sun for 24-48 hours.
6. If clothing comes into contact with sap or plant residue, it is a good idea to lauder these items separately.
7. Do not burn plants that may be poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac. The combustion by-products can cause severe allergic respiratory problems to anyone in the immediate area.

For first-aid, consider use wet compresses, calamine lotion, or hydrocortisone cream to reduce itching. If severe reactions occur, seek immediate medical attention.

Safety Training Attendance Roster

Trainer:	Training Date:
1.	9.
2.	10.
3.	11.
4.	12.

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5.	13.
6.	14.
7.	15.
8.	16.

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