



Mishap Review Board
06 November 2008

Mishap Report
Lacerated Leg

PWD Guantanamo Bay, Cuba



Mishap Report

- **Activity:** Vegetation Clearing for UXO Removal, Leeward North Future Migrant Camp
 - This area is in the Marine Corps Area of Responsibility, close to the western perimeter fence of GTMO, between Marine Observation Posts 3 and 6.
- **Type of Work:** Cutting grass with a Weed Whacker. Worker is a vegetation remover (medium duty work).
- **Date/Time of Incident:** 1445 on Tuesday 23 October 2008
- **Safety Investigator:** LTJG Tony Vader



Mishap Report

- **Description of Incident:** Metal “saw blade” on a STIHL SF 350 Weed Whacker hit a rock. Part of the blade broke off and lodged in the worker’s inner thigh.
- **Immediate Contractor Action:**
 - Injury inspected by on-site first aid personnel.
 - Injury inspected by NAVSTA Leeward medical team.
 - Patient transported (via ferry) to Windward medical facility for treatment.
 - Object removed from patients leg, and he received four stitches and a tetanus shot.
 - Review of STIHL SF 350 Weed Whacker manuals to look for recommendations on replacement intervals and wear indicators.

Typical Saw Blade: The blade pictured (left) is 2 weeks old, which amounts to around 100 hours of use.



STIHL SF 350 Weed Whacker: (right)
Note the guard, which prevents most debris from hitting the operator.



Mishap Report

- **Direct Cause of Incident:** Hidden rock in tall grass.
- **Indirect Cause:** Failure of individual to follow work plan. Contractor work plan calls for workers to begin cutting grass high off the ground and work down toward the ground. The worker in this case was too aggressive.
- **NOT a Cause:** Worn blade. Initial mishap report states that a worn blade was suspected. Upon review of equipment and manuals, this was ruled out as a cause.



Mishap Report

Long-Term Corrective Actions:

- Review of all AHA documentation to assure that correct instructions are echoed to the laborers. Workers **HAD** heard instruction on how to cut grass correctly (starting high and progressively cutting lower).
- Workers' separation distance was increased on rocky ground to avoid one worker being struck by debris flung by an adjacent workers Weed Whacker.
- Workers were reminded to survey clumps of grass before cutting.
- Blades were all inspected for wear. Contractor resolved to replace them more frequently (the blade that broke was 2 weeks old).
- Review of PPE for Vegetation Workers: Helmets, full face visors, hearing protection, gloves, pants, long sleeved shirts, and steel-toed boots.



Mishap Report

Questions?