

# Environmental Safety Starts with Shared Awareness

## Environmental Message - August 2026

Invasive species management starts before the first cut, mow, spray, or access route is used. Crews, planners, foresters, contractors, and environmental teams each bring a different perspective to the job site. When those perspectives are shared during planning and pre-job briefings, teams are better prepared to protect sensitive areas, avoid spreading invasive species, reduce exposure to hazardous plants, and maintain safe access for vegetation management work.

### Prevention: Stop the Spread Before It Starts

Prevention is the first and most effective step. Invasive plants can move on tires, trucks, boots, mats, tools, brush, soil, and plant fragments. Before entering or leaving a site, teams should understand whether they are working in or near a permitted area, wetland, high-quality habitat, restoration area, pollinator site, or known invasive species infestation.

Relevant BMP examples include inspecting and cleaning vehicles, equipment, clothing, footwear, and gear when moving from infested to uninfested areas, and avoiding cleaning near waterways where material could spread downstream.



*A simple reminder for crews:  
**Don't move the problem.***

*Seeds, soil, or plant fragments carried on equipment, boots, or tools can spread invasive plants and create a new infestation at the next work site.*

#### Pre-job briefings should include:

- Known invasive species in or near the work area
- Location(s) of sensitive or high biodiversity value areas
- Equipment cleaning expectations
- Access routes, staging areas, and parking locations
- Disposal or containment expectations for plant material, soil, or debris

### Protection During Control: Protect People and Maintain Safe Work Conditions

Some invasive species create direct safety risks. Crews may encounter plants that cause skin irritation, burns, respiratory irritation, allergic reactions, puncture wounds, or visibility/access issues. During control work, the goal is not only to remove or manage the plant, but to protect the people doing the work.

#### Pre-job briefings should identify:

- Plants that may cause burns, rashes, eye irritation, or respiratory issues
- Whether mowing, cutting, or chipping could aerosolize irritating compounds
- Required PPE, including gloves, eye protection, sleeves, respiratory protection, or wash protocols
- Safe handling and disposal methods
- Areas where dense invasive vegetation limits visibility, footing, escape routes, or access within the ROW



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## Management: Partner Where Invasives Are Already Established

On sites with heavy or widespread invasive species presence, eradication is often not feasible, and one crew visit is unlikely to solve the problem. Effective management may require repeated treatments to achieve long-term suppression or containment. Success often depends on coordinated, site-specific management efforts among utilities, landowners, agencies, conservation groups, municipalities, and other regional partners.



### Pre-job briefings can support eradication by documenting:

- The location and identity of invasive species present
- Whether infestations appear isolated or widespread
- What species may need follow-up treatment
- Whether access, timing, permitting, or partner coordination is needed
- Whether treatment could support broader IVM, habitat, pollinator, or ROW restoration goals

## Key Takeaways

Invasive species safety starts with shared awareness. Before work begins, teams should discuss which invasive species are present, where they occur, and how planned activities could affect or spread them. Seeds, soil, and plant fragments can be carried on equipment, boots, and tools, while some species may also pose direct health or safety risks to workers.

Crews, planners, foresters, contractors, and environmental teams all play a role in identifying risks early, communicating sensitive areas, and selecting work practices that protect people, the ROW, and surrounding habitats. Including invasive species in the pre-job conversation helps teams prepare for site-specific hazards, prevent accidental spread, and keep small infestations from becoming larger problems. Shared awareness makes invasive species management part of the team's overall safety and environmental responsibility.

## Resources: Learn More About Invasive Species and Ways to Enhance Habitat on ROW

- [UAA: Considerations for Management of Structurally Compatible Species \(Non-Native, Noxious, Or Invasive\)](#)
- [UAA: Habitat Enhancing Seed Blends](#)
- [Pollinator Partnership: Preventing the Spread of Invasive Plants: Best Management Practices for Transportation and Utility Corridors](#)
- [Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System \(EDDMapS\): Invasive Species Tracking](#)