

Harvest Wine Safety

Wine harvest season is an exciting and challenging time of year for wineries all over the country, including yours. After a year of nurturing, controlling and protecting your grape crop, nothing is more rewarding than harvesting the fruits of your labor. Typically, there is intense anticipation and stress spent wondering about how this year's harvest will go. Was the weather fair to you? Did you keep pests and disease away? Are you picking at the peak ripeness to get the quality tannins you desire? In addition to the many factors that affect a crop's outcome, you need to keep your team safe during harvest. Some of the most common hazards winery workers face occur during the crush season and include overexertion, sprains, falls on slippery surfaces, and cuts from sharp tools and machinery.

The common hazards become even more prevalent during night harvesting. Wineries may choose to harvest at night because it results in better wine, which means better control over the fermentation process. Additionally, night harvesting provides cooler conditions for workers. Wineries may also choose to harvest at night because the grapes are firmer, making it easier for de-stemming. These perks, however, come with their own costs as night harvesting is not highly regulated and employees can be exposed to new hazards in the dark.

Harvest crews can ensure safety during night-harvesting by surveying the grounds during the day and using the correct safety products. Harvest managers should ideally walk the grounds during daylight hours, marking any hazards with reflectors and manicuring vegetation or gaps in the ground that could get in the way.

From a safety perspective, ensure employees are equipped with the following personal protective equipment (PPE) and gear to ensure their safety during harvest.

Cut-resistant gloves

Cut-resistant gloves, which are commonly made of polyurethane, protect your hands from the hazardous materials being handled, such as shears, razors and other hand-held tools, machinery that have sharp edges, or broken glass.

High visibility and reflective markers

Hazard visibility is extremely important, especially when harvesting at night. Utilizing high visibility markers that have reflective properties allows you and your workers to see hazards ahead. You can mark holes and machinery with high visibility or reflective markers to signal to your team areas to avoid when harvesting.

Rain gear

Rain gear isn't just for a rainy harvest anymore. Rain suits keep employees dry around the crush pad and while performing certain cellar operations such as removing pomace (skins and seeds) from the tanks after fermentation or spraying down your work area with water. Having the correct gear to protect yourself and your employees is paramount. Coats and boots help you to stay dry, avoid slipping, and remain efficient.

Tear-away, hi-visibility vests

Mechanical harvesters create additional risks for you and those harvesting alongside you. Clothing and gear can get caught in machinery, which puts you at risk of being pulled in or down and suffering a traumatic injury. Wearing a tear-away or breakaway vest can protect workers as they are designed to tear right off and quickly free the person.

Since being visible to everyone working around you is equally important, consider high-visibility vests and t-shirts designed to help keep your team cool and protected--even during hot daytime temperatures. Besides helping you stand out from a safety standpoint, you can also stand out to your customers by getting the vest personalized with your winery's or vineyard's name and logo.

Importance of a reliable safety supplier

Ensuring that your workers have the proper safety gear is critical and contributes to the overall success of your season. Partnering with a reliable safety supplier who also has experience working with vintners is essential as you improve working conditions and eliminate hazards on

your grounds as well as with machinery and tools being used.

[Connect with an Airgas specialist](#) to learn more about PPE to keep your employees protected throughout harvest season.