



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE - MAYOR

LEAF BLOWER REGULATIONS

Notice: Pursuant to Somerville Code of Ordinances Section 9-120 the following Regulations were issued on 09-02-2021 by Inspectional Services Director Nicholas Antanavica. These are effective immediately and are subject to changes and amendments.

- (1) All provisions of the Somerville Code of Ordinances (the "Code"), Noise Control, Article VII Division 2 are incorporated herein and made a part hereof.
- (2) Unless explicitly exempted, all persons and municipal contractors or commercial leaf blower operators and their employees must comply with all provisions of Article VII Division 2 of the Code, including but not limited to sec. 9-120 ("Ordinance"), and the Regulations (the "Regulations") herein.
- (3) Only leaf blowers that are portable, handheld or backpack style powered by fuel, battery or electricity are regulated by the Ordinance.
- (4) Commercial leaf blower operators and Owners of Large Property (OLP)¹, as defined by the Ordinance, must submit an operations plan to ISD for review and approval in order to operate leaf blowers, or allow any of its employees to operate, leaf blowers in Somerville. The operations plan shall be submitted as part of a leaf blower permit application. If the application meets the standards of the Code and Regulations a permit will be issued by ISD. A permit shall be effective starting October 1st of the year the application is submitted, for one year and will be renewable annually. The permit will be subject to conditions, revocation, suspension and/or fines. The permit application at a minimum shall detail how the relevant Ordinances and Regulations will be met, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. A written safety plan
 - b. An affidavit attesting that all employees have been trained on the provisions of the relevant Code and the Regulations.
 - c. An inventory of all leaf blowing equipment owned and used or to be used by the owner or operator, along with relevant specification sheets showing they comply with EPA emission standards and are rated by the manufacturer to be no greater than 65 decibels.
- (5) Any company or person, including the property owner, who violates, or allows any other to violate, the provisions of the Code or these Regulations, may be subject to fines of \$300.00 per violation.

¹ own one or more adjoining parcels of land in common ownership that together comprise a total of two acres or more (SCO 9-120(a)).

- (6) All leaf blowers must meet current EPA emissions standards and cannot emit noise greater than 65 decibels, as rated by the manufacturer.
- (7) The user of a leaf blower must make all reasonable efforts to use it at the speed/throttle which emits the least sound and is least disturbing but can still accomplish the work to be performed.
- (8) Only one leaf blower can be used in parcels of 10,000 square feet or smaller.
- (9) Multiple leaf blowers can be used on parcels of land larger than 10,000 square feet so long as the leaf blowers are at least 10,000 square feet apart from each other.
- (10) When employees of the same commercial leaf blower operator are servicing adjacent parcels, the employees must not operate them simultaneously unless they are at least 10,000 square feet apart from each other.
- (11) Leaf blowers can only be used March 15 – May 31 and October 1 -December 15. The proper hours of operation during these periods are: Mondays through Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m. The use of leaf blowers is not permitted on Sundays and legal holidays.

Exceptions:

- a. Use of a leaf blower by an individual on the property at which they reside for not more than an aggregate of five minutes per day.
 - b. Use of leaf blowers by municipal operators and municipal contractors performing leaf blower operations at City Parks and Fields as detailed in SCO 9-120(b).
 - c. OLP provided it has been approved by ISD as part of its submitted operations plan and leaf blower permit.
- (12) Leaf blowers cannot be pointed at persons or animals. There must be a distance of at least fifty (50) feet between the user and any person or animal.
 - (13) It is prohibited to blow towards open windows or doors. When possible, leaf blowers are not to be used within 10 feet of windows or doors.
 - (14) Private citizens/individuals and commercial leaf blower operators are prohibited from blowing debris onto adjacent property, the street, catch basins, gutters, vehicles, people or animals.
 - (15) Municipal employees or Municipal contractors may blow leaves, dust, dirt, grass clippings, cuttings and trimming from trees and shrubs on a municipal street or sidewalk for collection and pick -up, during municipal street and sidewalk sweeping and cleaning operations.
 - (16) The leaf blower operator should use the longest possible nozzle for the equipment at maximum extension and orient the nozzle to reduce the sound.
 - (17) The leaf blower equipment must be checked regularly to ensure proper operation and compliant sound emissions.
 - (18) When feasible, prior to using a leaf blower, the operator must spray dusty areas with water.

The City thanks you for your compliance with the Code and these Regulations. We trust that you will ensure all employees are properly trained, provided protection gear and informed that that responsible use of a leaf blower includes using common sense. If there are any complaints or violations, please report them immediately to the City of through 311.

- (19) Leaf blowers may never be used for construction dust, plaster dust or dry garden topsoil.
- (20) Leaf blowers may never be used to move large mounds of debris. Rakes and brooms should be used whenever possible and always when loosening heavier debris.
- (21) Employees must use ear protection while operating a leaf blower. The ear protection must be provided by the employer at no cost to the employee.
- (22) Leaf blower operators shall use eye protection gear while operating the blower. The eye protection must be provided by the employer at no cost to the employee.

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