

MOWER SAFETY

An estimated 75 people will die this year as a result of a lawn mower related injury. Another 75,000 will wind up in the emergency room being treated for cuts and bruises, amputations and other life-altering injuries caused by mowers.

The operating manual for a lawn mower is required reading. Even if you've operated similar mowers in the past, do not skip this step. Reading the manual helps you become more familiar with the machine and will specify any important difference for safe operating—especially under emergency conditions. The manual also will outline maintenance requirements for the machine, which will contribute to safe operation.

HITTING THE SLOPES

Perhaps no other mowing environment is more obviously dangerous than sloped areas. Riding mowers make them especially treacherous for even the most experienced grounds managers. But there are a few techniques that can minimize a certain degree of the danger. First and foremost, you should use only riding mowers equipped with Roll-Over Protective Structures (ROPS), and you should wear your seatbelt. Doing these things in tandem will help protect you in the event that the mower loses its grip. Note that you should not use the seatbelt if you have a fold-down ROPS and it is in the folded position. Doing so could cause more harm than good if the mower rolled and you were trapped in the seat without the full protection of the ROPS bars.

Depending on the angle of the slope and the mower you are using, it may be possible to traverse a slope horizontally. But it is usually recommended that operators mow in an up-and-down pattern to minimize the potential for tipping the mower. Also, always analyze the site before mowing. Look for any element that could be a hazard, such as water at the bottom of a slope or large rocks or drop-offs. Lastly, look for anything that could affect your traction. If the soil is sandy, it's not going to be as stable; turf grass length will also affect traction, as well as whether turf is wet or dry.

TIPS FOR SAFE OPERATION OF RIDING MOWERS

- ❖ Never carry passengers.
- ❖ Do not mow in reverse unless absolutely necessary. Always look down and behind before and while backing.
- ❖ Never direct discharged material toward anyone. Avoid discharging material against a wall or obstruction. Material may ricochet back toward the operator. Stop the blade(s) when crossing gravel surfaces.

- ❖ Do not operate the machine without the entire grass catcher, discharge guard, or other safety devices in place and working.
- ❖ Slow down before turning.
- ❖ Never leave a running machine unattended. Always turn off the blade(s), set the parking brake, stop the engine, and remove the key before dismounting.
- ❖ Disengage blade(s) when not mowing. Shut off engine and wait for all parts to come to a complete stop before cleaning the machine, removing the grass catcher, or unclogging the discharge guard.
- ❖ Operate machine only in daylight or good artificial light.
- ❖ Watch for traffic when operating near or crossing roadways.
- ❖ Always wear eye protection when operating the machine.
- ❖ Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for wheel weights or counterweights.

Source Contents: U.S. Consumers Product Safety Commission and American National Standards Institute (ANSI). (Users of Safety Talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations).

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