

Landscaping – Riding Lawn Mowers Fact Sheet



WHAT ARE SOME SAFETY TIPS WHEN USING RIDING LAWN MOWERS?

Training

- Read, understand, and follow the instructions in the manufacturer's operating manual.
- Ensure your supervisor has fully trained you on how to operate the mower. Your supervisor should demonstrate how to use the mower, and observe you working with it until satisfied that you can operate it safely.
- Be aware of the mower's safety features, including how to stop the mower quickly in case of an emergency.
- Test ride the machine and become familiar with it before engaging the mower blade.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Wear hearing and head protection and safety glasses.
- Wear close-fitting clothes, and sturdy, non-slip safety toe footwear (no barefeet, sandals or sneakers!)
- Portable music players are not recommended since they are a distraction.
- Check that the tractor is equipped with a rollover protective structure (ROPS) and a seat belt. If not, have it retrofitted for one. In Ontario, tractors over 20 horsepower require a ROPS.

Preparing the area

- Clear the work area of debris, sticks, stones, toys, etc. that might be thrown by the blades. Lawn mowers blades can throw out hit material at about 91 metres per second (300 feet per second) or 330 kilometres per hour (200 miles per hour).
- Keep people and pets away from the work area.
- Ensure grass is dry.

Preparing the mower

- Maintain mower and attachments in good operating condition. An annual inspection by an experienced technician is a good idea.
- Keep safety devices and guards in place. The operator-presence switch should stop the mower immediately when you release the control.
- Inspect the mower prior to starting. Make certain that the blade is sharp and secure.

- Check that the power take off, mower input driveline, drive belts, chains, and gears are all properly guarded. Repair or replace if necessary.
- Set mower at the highest cutting point when operating on rough ground before starting the mower.
- Run the engine at the lowest speed that will do the job (reduces force of thrown objects).
- Check the blade-mounting bolts frequently for tightness.
- Check grass catcher bags for wear. Replace worn bags.
- Add gasoline when the mower is turned off and the engine is cool. Do not smoke when refueling!
- Restart engine at least 8 metres (25 feet) from where you refueled to avoid igniting vapours.
- Store gasoline safely – outside and away from any heat source.

Mowing tips

- Disengage all attachment clutches and shift mower into neutral before attempting to start the engine.
- Only start the mower when seated in the driver's seat.
- Look behind mower when backing up for children, pets or obstructions. Back up only minimal distances.
- Mow straight up and down slopes rather than sideways for greater stability (unless mower is counter-balanced).
- Reduce speed on slopes and when making sharp turns to prevent tipping or loss of control.
- Watch for rocks, holes and other hazards, including tree limbs or shrubs at eye level.
- Mow very tall grass twice at 90-degree angles if possible.
- Mow only in daylight.
- Stop and inspect the blades and shaft if the mower runs into a rock or stump. Damaged blades can cause vibration and vibration can loosen the blades.
- Keep the discharge chute pointed away from buildings, people, and animals.
- Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
- There are many tips in other Landscaping OSH Answers documents.

What should I be aware of when pulling loads?

Pull loads as follows:

- Use approved hitch points.
- Limit load weight and size to what is recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do not turn sharply.
- Use counterweights as recommended by manufacturer.

Before making any repairs or adjustments, what should I do?

Disengage power to attachments and stop the motor before leaving operator's position or making any repairs or adjustments by:

- setting the brakes;
- putting the transmission in park, if possible;
- turning off the ignition and removing the ignition key;
- disconnect the spark plug to insure that the engine cannot start for any reason.

If it is unavoidable that you have to stop on a slope, chock in the front and back of a "drive" wheel to prevent the mower moving unexpectedly.

What should I avoid doing when using a riding lawn mower?

- Do not use mower on a very steep slope. The mower may tip or roll over, causing serious injury.

- Do not drive too close to a creek or ditch.
- Do not remove grass catcher or unclog chute with the motor running.
- Do not leave mower on a slope.
- Do not carry passengers.
- Do not stop or start suddenly when going uphill or downhill.
- Do not run the engine indoors.
- Do not mount or dismount while the mower is running. There is sufficient space for your toes to pass under the mower housing and be struck by the blade.
- Do not leave a lawn mower unattended if the engine is running (even if the blade is not turning).
- Do not touch hot motor parts.



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