

SAFETY

Safety practices ensure safe mowing

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For some of us, mowing the lawn is a pleasant summer activity. Many people love the fresh air, the aroma of fresh-cut grass and the satisfaction of getting

a chore done with a side helping of exercise. And we can continue to enjoy mowing if safety precautions and measures are in place and taken.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 34,000 consumer injuries related to riding mower incidents were treated annually in hospital emergency rooms from 2010 to 2012. Based on incident reports to the Commission, an annual average of approximately 90 deaths were attributed to riding mowers from 2007 to 2009.

Fatal incidents follow several common patterns: the mower tips over; a person falls under or is run over by the mower; or a person is thrown from or falls off the mower. Incidents involving young children usually involve them falling under or getting run over by the mower.

Here are some safety recommendations for operating a lawn mower and for people riding on a mower:

- Dress appropriately by wearing long pants, long-sleeved shirts, eye

- and ear protection, heavy gloves, and sturdy, closed-toed shoes with slip-resistant rubber soles.
- Wear sun protection and a wide-brimmed hat, and drink plenty of water.
- Never disengage the fail-safe mechanism found on power mowers. It triggers an important safety feature of stopping the blades quickly if the handle of a walk-behind mower is released or the operator of a ride-on mower is off the seat.
- Turn the mower off before attempting to examine the blades, dislodge debris or adjust the wheel height.

- Avoid mowing the lawn when it is wet and slippery.
- Do not allow children under the age of 16 to use riding mowers or children under 12 years of age to use walk-behind mowers.
- Never allow passengers on riding mowers.
- Always look behind you before putting a riding mower in reverse.
- Slow down to mow slopes and take wide, gradual turns. Mow down a slope, not across, to avoid tipping over.

Using a hand-held string trimmer to mow a ditch is highly recom- ▶



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mended. Follow the safety recommendations, keep firm footing and

balance, don't overreach, and take time to read the operator's manual.

Lawn mower injuries are preventable when you use safe practices. ■