

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Mower Safety



We are in the middle of the heavy grass mowing season. The dangers of any mower are critical, but the larger the mower the more damage they can do. However, if we follow sound safety practices, use the proper personal protective equipment and maintain the mowers in good repair, we greatly reduce the potential of an accident.

MOWER HAZARDS -

The main source of hazards on any mower is the blade. Obviously, the blade does the work, so it stands to reason that it must be sharp and it rotates at a high rate of speed. These two traits can cause havoc with a hand or foot, if either happens to get into the blade. I have seen the results of a foot in a rotary (Yazoo model) type with my dad. We were repairing my mower and someone drove by and blew the horn. We looked to see who it was and the mower rolled over his foot and sliced the top off. With surgery and stitches, he recovered after a long rehabilitation period.

Another hazard, especially with walking rotary mowers is the method or path of cutting. Using a push mower, we should never mow up and down a slope. There is always the possibility of slipping and the mower rolling on your foot, if you are pushing. Pulling a mower up a slope is just as dangerous, as the foot can slip and slide under the mower. With a push mower, we should always mow across the slope. In this manner, if we slip, we normally would fall beside the mower and not under it. With riding mowers, it is better to cut up and down the slope. Cutting across the slope on a rider creates the chance of falling off the side or a possible rollover.

There is the hazard of objects being thrown out from under the mower carriage. The tip of the blades can be turning at approximately 200 miles per hour, depending upon the mower size, etc. If a person were to be struck with a rock, wire or other object at this force, a disabling injury or possibly death could result. Refueling hot engines or smoking while refueling is another type of potential hazard. Carbon monoxide poisoning can result if we start the engine in an enclosed area.

SAFE PRACTICES -

- Prepare the area for mowing by checking for casual debris each time you get ready to mow. Even between mowing, for various reasons, objects can collect in the yard or field, so the little extra time that it takes is surely worth the effort. Objects can be lost in weeds or tall grass. It is always possible to run into a fixed object, hidden by weeds or tall grass that will shatter the blade and maybe throw jagged steel particles from the undercarriage.

- **Handle Fuel with Care** – Always allow the mower to cool down before refueling. A hot muffler can ignite vapors from gasoline. If you should overfill the tank and the spill hits the pavement or ground, stop and clean it up immediately. Gasoline is highly flammable and will vaporize in the air and form a mixture that will ignite very easy. Vaporization can occur with the temperature as low as zero degrees.
- **Wear appropriate clothing** – Always wear sturdy, non-slip soles on your shoes or boots. Steel-toed shoes or boots will offer the most protection. We should never wear or allow anyone else to wear sandals, tennis shoes or open-toed shoes while mowing.
- **Use the right type of mower for the job** – survey the size of the job to be done and select the mower to accomplish it. For example, don't use a small push mower with a 5 hp engine to cut waist high weeds.

Rear engine riding mowers, lawn tractors, and garden tractors are all designed to cut grass. However, the engine power, cutting blade widths and other capabilities are very different:

- Don't allow extra riders on your tractor. Clear the area of bystanders before starting a mowing assignment.
- Assuming that the area has been canvassed for causal debris, continue to watch, while cutting, for tin cans, glass bottles or other objects that could result in an injury or cause repairs to the mower.
- Avoid mowing on steep slopes. It could cause a potential rollover. Avoid ditches for the same reason.
- Don't ever attempt to unclog the mower chute while the machine is running.
- Anytime that it becomes necessary to reach under the mower carriage, shutting down the engine is not safe enough. Take the little extra time and disconnect the spark plug so that there is no way the engine will start. This little extra time to disconnect and reconnect the spark plug is a far better investment than recovering from a serious injury cause by accidental start-up.
- Maintain a sharp blade for easier cutting and a smoother look. Mow only in daylight.
- Refrain from cutting wet grass. Several things can happen and they are all bad. (Walking or riding, wet grass is a slip hazard and will clog the mower.)
- Be sure that the blades are completely stopped before attempting to work on the blade or under carriage.
- Whether you are using a push type or rider, read the manufacturer's instruction manual so that you will be totally familiar with all the parts and safety features of the machine.

**ACCIDENTS~BIG OR SMALL
~AVOID THEM ALL ~**