



# MAFES Dawg Tracks

April 11, 2011



## Mowing Safety



Spring is here and the sweet aroma of fresh mown grass is in the air. That sweet smell can turn bad quickly with a mower accident, however. With that thought in our minds, we should get a “heads up” on mowing safely during the coming mowing season.

Hazards most often associated with riding equipment are blade contact and loss of stability. The U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission estimates that 37,000 consumer injuries related to riding mower incidents were treated annually in hospital emergency rooms during 2003 through 2005. Based on these figures, they estimated that there were 95 deaths attributed to riding mowers during 2001-2003. Fatal incidents occur in several patterns: The machine tips over or the victim falls under or is run over by the mower. Other causes are the victim gets thrown off or falls off of the mower.

In the following dialogue, we shall review some tips that, if used, will help to reduce the potential for a serious accident on mowers:

### ZERO TURN RADIUS MOWERS –

These mowers have gained popularity quickly because of their ability to mow close to buildings and landscaping. Improper use of the mower and the lack of safety precautions, combined with the mower’s ability to turn at 180 degrees and its low center of gravity, lends itself to a rise in tipping hazards.

#### **Safety Basics -**

- Read and follow the directions in the operator’s manual. If you lose the original, get the dealer to order you another.
- Keep clear of the mower’s rotating parts.
- Avoid mowing in reverse.
- Wear all the personal protective equipment required in the operator’s manual.
- Hand trim areas near water or on drop offs.

#### **Slope operations-**

- Do not operate a zero turn radius mower on a slope greater than 15 degrees.
- Keep the mower’s movement slow and steady.
- Apply even pressure on the steering levers.
- Maintain a safe distance from drop offs and water and other hazards.
- Do not make rapid corrections or turns.
- Mow up and down slopes, not across.
- Avoid wet slopes to prevent losing traction and tipping.

Many zero turn radius manufacturers are equipping their products with Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) and seat belts. Safe operating procedures must still be followed when the mower is equipped with the ROPS.

### ROTARY AGRICULTURAL MOWER SAFETY –

An incident with a rotary mower can cost you your life! It can also injure innocent bystanders; so it is important that they are alerted and aware of the safety rules.

### GOOD SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ROTARY MOWERS –

- **Use the right type of mower for the job -** Be sure that you have the right type of mower for the job. For example, don’t cut brush with a mower designed for forage. You could be exposed to hazards caused by machine failure.
- **Keep others away -** “No Riders” should always be in effect and bystanders should be prohibited from being in the mowing area. Bystanders could be seriously hurt or killed by debris slung from the mower.
- **Check & clean the mowing area before you start cutting -** Check & clean the area each time before you start mowing. Tin cans, rocks, brush or other objects can be thrown from the mower.
- **Be alert to obstacles -** Be observant, looking for ditches, stumps, rocks that could throw you off the tractor or cause the tractor to turn over. Be especially observant when cutting in tall grass for unknown or unseen debris or other obstacles. **USE THE SEAT BELT IF THE TRACTOR IS EQUIPPED WITH ROPS!**
- **Before dismounting for any reason -** You should never dismount the tractor without disengaging the power take off (PTO), turn off the engine and lock the brakes.
- **Be sure the blades are stopped before approaching the mower -** Many rotary mowers have blades that continue to run down after the PTO is disengaged.
- **Be careful turning sharp corners -** On pull-type mowers, the rear wheel could catch the mower frame and throw it on you. With 3-point hitch mounted mowers, the mower could swing outward when you make a turn. Front wheel weights may be needed to help keep control.
- **Set the rear wheels as wide as possible -** Wide set tires provide greater tractor stability and lessen the chance of a tractor turnover.
- As is true with all equipment, regular inspection and maintenance is the key to efficient use and longer life for any type of equipment. Mowers are no different.
- Refer to the owner’s manual for proper maintenance procedures.
- Before making pre-operational checks, be sure that the PTO is disengaged and the engine is shut off.
- Sharp blades are the key to efficient cutting on any mower, so maintain sharp blades and replace when sharpening is no longer an option.
- Rotary mowers are equipped with runners and guards. Keep the runners just high enough so that they don’t ride on the runner shoes.