



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY  
EXPERIMENT STATION

# MAFES DAWG TRACKS

Surely you have realized too, how crazy fast the grass is growing these last few weeks. Whether you are mowing a yard or clipping with a tractor, objects thrown out from under this equipment can be dangerous.

Objects on the ground (for example - toys, rocks, debris, etc.) can become projectiles when struck by cutting blades. These objects can travel up to 200 miles per hour after leaving the discharge chute on a lawn mower. These projectiles can cause property damage or serious injuries to people in the area.

Discharge chutes and openings are equipped with a protective guard or deflector to stop objects from becoming projectiles. This could be the plastic flap or metal plate on a lawn mower or a set of chains on tractor's rotary cutter. However, for any type of deflector to be effective, it must remain in the correct position and be maintained in good condition. Routine daily, monthly, and yearly maintenance procedures will keep your equipment in top condition and can help you increase your productivity, while also decreasing any risks of injuries or property damage.

A common, dangerous practice on a lawn mower is tying up the deflector to increase grass flow from a mower's chute; this defeats the purpose of reducing a thrown projectile's speed. While objects will still be thrown out of a discharge, it will reduce the distance that object it will travel. This could mean the difference in hitting a person or building's window or not.

For more info contact:  
**Leslie Woolington**  
MAFES/MSU-ES Risk Mgmt.  
[LHW4@msstate.edu](mailto:LHW4@msstate.edu)  
662.325.3204

Follow these tips to avoid injury and property damage while mowing.

1. Inspect the area to be mowed.

Clear the work area as much as possible before you begin. Pick up sticks, rocks, wire and other debris before you begin. If there is an object in taller grass areas that cannot be removed, flag them so visible and can be avoided.

Also, avoid overly wet grounds, which can cause slippery conditions on hillside or cause equipment to become stuck.

2. Keep children and bystanders away from the area! If someone is passing by, turn the cutting blades off.

3. Mow in a direction that blows discharge away from people, buildings, vehicles, and roadways.

In addition to the obvious injuries to people and possible broken windows & holes in siding from projectiles, grass clippings themselves can be a danger to motorcyclists. Grass clippings are often blown or left in the road, which is equivalent to ice in the road for a motorcycle tire. This can lead to serious injuries or even death for those that ride.

4. Shut off blade rotation when crossing a sidewalk, driveway or road.

Also shut off rotation when driving the equipment to another area that needs mowing.

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## Sources:

<https://ag-safety.extension.org/riding-lawnmower-safety/>  
[https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/2019-03/mowing-trimming\\_safety\\_manual.pdf](https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/2019-03/mowing-trimming_safety_manual.pdf)  
<http://grounds-mag.com/mag>