

Riding Lawn Mower Safety

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Riding lawn mowers provide a convenient and easy way for homeowners and other grounds keepers to mow their lawns. However, the fun and convenience of a riding lawn mower can quickly turn into tragedy if the operator does not give complete and undivided attention to the safe operation of the machine.

Read the Owner's Manual First

A riding mower is a fairly complicated mechanism designed to be efficient and safe if operated according to manufacturer's instructions. Before the mower is taken out of the garage, all operators should READ THE OWNER'S MANUAL FIRST. After all, it was written for them. Learn about the machine and its controls before trying to operate it. Learn the right way to start it, but most importantly, LEARN HOW TO STOP THE MACHINE QUICKLY. A survey showed that 90 percent of riding mower accidents causing injuries occurred to 'first time' operators.

Special Safety Rules for Riding Mowers

The rotary is the most popular of the three types of riding mowers - rotary, reel and sickle bar. It is the least costly; does an acceptable job for the average homeowner; is mechanically simple and will handle tall growth. It is also the most dangerous type.

- Do not let kids operate a riding mower until they are big enough and old enough to handle it safely. Do not let kids or grown-ups operate it until they have had proper instruction.



- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing that could get caught in moving parts. Also, keep your hands and feet away from moving parts.



- Do not carry passengers. A riding mower is made to carry only one person.



- Clear the lawn area of foreign objects, children and pets before starting to mow. Do not attempt to clear the lawn while mowing. Foreign objects hurled by the mower's blade can injure children in the area. Also, children could be run over by the machine.



- Properly maintain the mower by following the manufacturer's instructions - check all fasteners, guards and parts. Built-in safety features are effective only if maintained and kept in place.
- Disengage all clutches, including the mower blade, and put gear shift in neutral before starting the engine. Most mowers now have safety interlocks which prevent the engine from starting unless all controls are in proper position and newer mowers will not start without an operator on the seat.
- Test ride the machine and become familiar with it before engaging the mower blade.

- Watch where you drive. Be extra careful when backing. Watch out for holes and hidden hazards. Do not drive too close to a creek or ditch and be mindful of any obstructions, such as utility vents in your lawn.

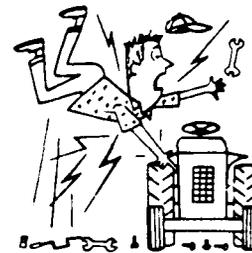


- Be especially careful on slopes to prevent tipping or losing control. Reduce speed on all slopes and when making sharp turns. Usually, it is safer to mow steeper slopes up and down, but do not attempt to mow up and down any slope so steep that the mower loses traction.



- Disengage mower blade when moving on pavement, across walks or on gravel lanes.
- Do not attempt to operate the mower when not in driver's seat. Electric start riding mowers have a seat switch which stops the blade, drive train and engine if the operator leaves the seat and will not restart without an operator of sufficient weight being on the seat.

- Shut off the mower and engine before attempting to make any adjustments or repairs, or to unclog the mower. Do not restart the mower except from the driver's seat.



- Do not gas up when the engine is running, while it is hot, or while smoking. Handle gasoline with care. It is highly flammable. Use only approved gasoline containers.



Safety Depends on the Operator

These safety tips are only as good as the operator makes them be. Power mower manufacturers have developed safer riding mowers. But the best engineered mower won't prevent a careless operator from causing an accident and injury. Remember that safety with riding lawn mowers is the operator's responsibility.

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