

Safety Health Publishing

Off the Job Safety - Lawnmower Safety

Summertime is finally around the corner. This means that grass will start to green and grow, and people will be using lawnmowers to mow it. This also means that many people will pay a visit to emergency departments of hospitals throughout the country with lawnmower related injuries.

In many cases, people use lawnmowers as part of their job. Because of the safety rules of the company, they wear the proper safety equipment such as steel toe boots and goggles. It's plain to see that this is not the case in most homes. Drive down a residential street on any summer evening and you will see people cutting lawns in sandals while their children are playing close by. On occasion, seemingly intelligent people will take a perfectly good hand and reach under a running lawnmower to retrieve something as valuable as an old stick, or a wet clump of grass. The result can be disastrous.

In order to prevent these things from happening, we must realize that lawnmowers are dangerous if used carelessly.

In one lawnmower related incident, a woman was cutting her lawn with a power mower. As she walked backwards up a hill, pulling the mower, one foot slipped and slid underneath the lawnmower. The result was a severely lacerated foot with multiple fractures.

Several features in newer lawnmowers have improved safety. For example, the deadman lever has to be kept depressed in order to keep the mower running. The rubber flap at the back helps prevent objects from being thrown by the blades. However, no safety feature is foolproof. Always treat lawnmowers with respect.

Whether you use a gas, electric, riding or a push mower, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Before you use the lawnmower, read the manufacturer's directions to familiarize yourself with all the controls.
2. Clear objects such as bottle caps, rocks, roofing nails etc. from the lawn. A lawnmower can hurl objects at a speed of 320 km/hr. Keep children a safe distance away.
3. Don't wear sandals or go barefoot when you mow the lawn. Steel-toed shoes are much safer. Safety goggles will protect your eyes.

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4. Lawn mowers are loud. Wear proper hearing protection such as earplugs or earmuffs. Look in your yellow pages under safety equipment to purchase hearing protection.
5. Cut the grass when it's dry. Wet grass clogs the mower; you may be tempted to remove it with your hand. Mowing the wet grass with an electric mower increases the chance of electric shock.
6. When using electric mowers, be careful not to run over the cord. Make sure you are using a three-pronged plug and the electrical outlet has a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter.
7. Fill the lawnmower with gas in a ventilated area when the mower is cool. Don't smoke while filling the mower. Store the gas in an approved container. Avoid filling the gas tank right to the top; leave an air space to help prevent spillage. If you spill gasoline, wait for it to evaporate before starting the lawnmower.

If you have a riding mower, don't allow extra riders. Many children have been injured or killed while riding as passengers on small tractors. These machines are not designed to carry passengers.

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