

Lawn Mower Safety

Shorts and bare feet are common with the arrival of summer, but not for the person with grass-cutting responsibility. Mower-related injuries result in tens of thousands of people seeking medical attention each year. Several precautions should be taken when it comes to mowing the yard. Knowledge of your lawn mower and its safety devices is critical. Reading and understanding your owner's manual is key.

CLOTHING

While cutting grass, wear the appropriate clothing, such as closed-toe leather shoes or boots. Never wear sandals or flip-flops or go bare foot while mowing. With a push mower, long pants are needed to protect your legs from any flying objects that may come from the rear of the lawn mower.

LAWN INSPECTION

Before mowing, you should inspect the yard for any foreign materials that could be expelled if run over by the lawn mower. Objects can fly up from the lawn mower at speeds up to 200 miles per hour. For this reason, always make sure the discharge chute is in place. This feature keeps thrown projectiles at a low trajectory. Mow the grass when it is dry for better traction and to lessen the chance of clogging. Workers or spectators should not be allowed in the area whenever someone is mowing.

MOWER MAINTENANCE

After the yard has been inspected, check the oil and gas before mowing. Disconnect the spark plug when servicing the mower. People have been injured while repairing a mower when it accidentally started while the blades were being manually turned. Replace any worn or broken parts before operating a mower. A mower in proper running condition is safer.

Make sure the lawn mower is turned off when filling with gas. Gasoline is very explosive, and a running or hot engine could result in a fire or explosion. Fuel should be kept in approved containers and clearly labeled.

Make sure that all shields are in place and any safety devices that are built into your lawn mower — such as a safety switch that cuts the mower off if you get off the seat — are working properly. A release handle is common on push mowers. It requires the operator to hold the device in order to keep the mower running.

PROPER MOWING PROCEDURES

Never allow another person to ride with you when cutting grass. This person has a chance of falling off and being run over. To prevent rollovers, never cut across a steep slope on a riding lawn mower. If cutting uphill and the lawn mower slips or spins, do not attempt to continue going upward; the hill is too steep and a rear rollover is possible. Try to cut going downhill. Always have the mower in a low gear while going downhill and gently apply brakes to slow down. Never go down a hill with the transmission out of gear. With a push mower, always cut across the slope. This prevents contact with the mower if a fall or slip were to occur.

Never stick your hand underneath a mower to unclog it while it is running. The blades are turning too fast for anyone to avoid serious injury. Always disengage the blade and shut the mower off. Once the mower is off, let the blade come to a stop before unclogging.

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