

# Lawnmower Safety

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings. Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it. Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

## BEGINNING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide. The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting. At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Know your machine

Safe use of commercial mowers depends on gaining an understanding of each machine's capacity and operating characteristics. For example, you need to find out which materials a particular unit can cut safely.

Study the operator's manual in detail before starting to use equipment. You must know how to use the mower, tractor, and various accessories. Determine the purpose of all the controls, gauges, and dials. Learn the safe speed, slope capabilities, braking and steering characteristics, turning radius, and operating clearances.

Confirm that all guards, shields, and safety signs recommended by the

manufacturer are installed. Study the danger, warning, and caution decals affixed to the machine.

### **Don't operate a machine with missing or damaged protective devices.**

Before the start of each workday, make the following checks:

- Repair or replace any loose, broken, missing, or damaged parts on both mower and tractor.
- Sharpen or replace cutting blades as recommended by the manufacturer. Damaged blades do a poor job, and can cause dangerous imbalance. Make sure that all guards and shields are in place and tightly fastened.
- Check tractor and mower hydraulic systems. Have any leaks or damaged parts repaired.

### **Prepare the work area**

Look for any condition that might be hazardous-ditches, potholes, drop-offs, steep slopes, stumps, etc. Remove any objects which could be thrown by the mower. Remember that obstacles are harder to see in tall grass, weeds, or brush. Check for overhead clearance when operating boom or wing-type mowers.

Determine the best and safest way to proceed with cutting. Consider the height and type of material to be mowed, and the terrain over which you must operate. Plan a pattern that will allow you to travel straight forward as much as possible.

### **Protect yourself**

Steel-toed safety footwear is mandatory. Full length, close-fitting clothes should be worn. A hat, safety eyewear, hearing protection, and gloves round out the proper garb for this type of work.

### **Watch out for others**

Watch out for others. Make sure no one is under, on, or near the machinery. Let other workers and bystanders know you will be starting up. **Under no circumstances should children or pets be anywhere near the work area-NO RIDERS!** If anyone comes near the area while you are mowing, shut off the equipment. An object hurled by a mower could cause serious or fatal injury.

### **Safe mowing practices**

- Be sure the transmission is out of gear and the mower blade clutch disengaged before starting the engine.
- Engage the mower drive at low engine RPM and the equipment at maximum cutting height. Check for excessive vibration and unusual noises. If there is any indication of trouble, shut the machine down and carry out an inspection. Mower blades may continue to rotate for some time, so wait until *all* movement has stopped before leaving the tractor seat. Block the raised mower before inspection.
- Raise speed to rated RPM, and lower the mower to the desired working height.
- Proper ground speed will depend on the height, type and density of material to be cut, and the nature of the terrain.
- Slow down on slopes and when turning sharply to avoid a rollover. Be alert for holes or other hidden dangers.
- With under mount, rear mount, pull-type, and wing mowers, always try to mow down slopes, never up or across the face.
- With side mount, offset, and sicklebar mowers, always mow across the slope with the mower on the uphill side. Never operate with the mower pointed downhill. Avoid turning uphill quickly or sharply with this class of mowers.
- Use extreme caution when operating on very uneven terrain. Ground speed should be slow, and turns wide and gradual.
- Pass diagonally through sharp dips. Avoid sudden drop-offs to prevent "hanging up" of the tractor and mower.
- Extreme caution is required when mowing ditch banks. If a wing or side mount mower hits an obstruction, the front of the tractor will usually swerve toward the ditch.
- Do not mow in reverse unless specifically recommended in the operator's manual. Always look behind before backing up. Small children or bystanders may have strayed into the area without your knowledge.
- Keep feet and hands away from v-belts, shafts, and other moving parts. In fact, the mower should not be running unless the operator is sitting on the seat.

## GENERAL SAFETY REVIEW

This is a time to review all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any safety hazards from any other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about any health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

## **ENDING THE MEETING**

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

---

---

Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

---

---

Comments:

---

---