Agricultural/Industrial Mower Safety

Safety Talk

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Neglecting to ensure all elements of mower safety are considered and that each job has been thoroughly planned out beforehand, could lead to the injury or fatality of yourself or a bystander. Many operators do not understand the dangers or fail to respect the risks to save time and/or extra work. It is important to avoid cutting corners by adhering to the proper safety measures and ensuring the necessary maintenance of equipment.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Agricultural mower safety is a multi-faceted system. Without familiarizing yourself with a mower's operating characteristics (i.e. its mowing capacity, the purpose of its control features and correct operating procedures, and its safety features), you risk the many hazards caused by machine failure. Neglecting to prepare the work area by removing objects or being aware of obstacles, could cause the hazards of thrown objects or tractor roll-over. Failing to wear the proper protective gear increases the chances of suffering serious injury. On the other hand, allowing bystanders or passengers puts someone else at risk of falling beneath the running mower or being struck by an object hurled by the mower blades.

EXAMPLE

An experienced operator fails to check the work area for objects. He is in a hurry, the weather is prime for getting the job done, and he does not want to risk losing the day to finding potential hazards. He hits a stump and falls from the seat and is fatally run over by the mower.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Before beginning the job, it is necessary to ensure all safety measures are in place. Establishing an accident prevention strategy will set you on the right path to making a habit out of safe mowing practices. Here are a few you can implement:

- Understand what each piece of machinery is equipped to handle.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the controls, gauges, and dials of your machine, as well as the safe speed, slope capabilities, braking and steering characteristics, turning radius, and operating clearances.
- Ensure all guards, shields and safety signs are in place and that you have studied all danger, warning, and caution decals on your machine.
- Seek out any potential hazards (i.e. ditches, potholes, drop-offs, steep slopes, etc.) that could cause your fall or mower over-turn.
- Remove all objects that could be thrown by the mower.
- Map out the safest route, considering terrain and the type of material you are mowing, and make sure you choose a pattern that allows you to travel as straightforward as you possibly can.
- Wear the proper PPE: safety glasses, steel-toed boots, close-fitting clothes, hat, hearing protection and gloves.
- Do not allow passengers.

Follow these steps from starting up and shutting down the machine:

- Before starting the engine, ensure the transmission is out of gear and the mower blade clutch is disengaged.
- Start the mower drive at a low RPM and keep at a maximum cutting height.
- Listen for suspicious sounds, if you suspect an issue, shut the machine down, wait for the blades to stop completely, and block the raised mower before inspection.
- Proceed by raising speed to a rated RPM and lower the mower to an appropriate height.
- Go at a speed appropriate for the height and material you

are cutting, and the condition of the terrain.

- Proceed slowly and with caution when operating on slopes, on uneven terrain and in ditches, and always keep an eye out for hidden dangers.
- Try to mow down slopes, never up or across the face, when operating under mount, rear mount, pull-type, and wing mowers.
- When operating side mount, offset and sicklebar mowers, avoid mowing downhill or turning quickly. Ensure the mower is on the uphill side.
- Unless the operator’s manual recommends it, avoid mowing in reverse.
- The mower should only be running if the operator is in the seat.

Follow recommended shutdown procedures on a flat surface. Avoid leaving the machine on any kind of slope.

FINAL WORD

There are many hidden dangers to operating agricultural mowers. It is strongly advised to get to know your machine inside and out and ensure your working area is in the safest condition possible. It may mean a little more time, but not taking that time could result in life-threatening consequences.