Lawn Mower Safety Meeting Kit

LAWN MOWER SAFETY TALK

Using a lawn mower is an activity most of us do at home or on the job quite often. Lawn mowers and other landscaping equipment are responsible for many injuries every year.

TYPES OF LAWN MOWER INJURIES

- **Cuts:** Cuts can occur anywhere on the body but most often occur on the hands and feet from the sharp blades. Small wounds or cuts can harbor unsafe bacteria. Infections are common, and antibiotic medicines usually are necessary.
- **Burns:** The hot engine, gas tank or exhaust of a lawn mower can cause burns.
- **Missile Injuries:** A variety of injuries may be caused by items, such as wires or loose objects in the lawn, being thrown from the spinning blades.
- **Fractures (Broken Bones):** The rotating blades of a mower can cause broken bones if you come in contact with them
- **Amputations:** The sharp blades of a mower can amputate part of an arm, leg, hand or foot. Burns, cuts and fractures can be so severe that the injured part of the body requires amputation to prevent infection and further complications.

PREVENT LAWN MOWER INJURIES

- Read your mower’s instruction manual prior to use.
- Keep your mower in good working order with sharp blades. Only use a mower that has protection over hot and sharp parts.
- Pick up potential flying objects, such as stones, toys and debris, before you start mowing.
- Wear goggles, hearing protection, gloves and long pants. Always wear sturdy close-toed shoes while mowing the lawn.

- Do not drink alcohol or use other substances before or while using your lawn mower.
- Do not remove safety devices or guards on switches.
- Never insert hands or feet into the mower to remove grass or debris. Even with the motor turned off, the blade can still be spinning. Use a stick or broom handle instead. The machine must be turned off and the spark plug disconnected (or power cord unplugged for electric models) before attempting to remove the object. The machine will likely still have one “turn” remaining in the motor/gears even after the power is disconnected, and the blades/rotors will turn forcefully once the obstruction is cleared. DO NOT assume that you are safe just because the power switch is off.
- Never lift a mower by the bottom for transport; the blades can cut fingers even if they are not moving. When being moved or picked up, the lawn mower should be turned off, spark plug disconnected, and unplugged.
- Never cut grass when it is wet or damp.
- Never allow children under age 12 to operate a push mower or those under 16 to drive a riding mower. Keep children off the lawn while mowing, and never have a passenger on your riding mower, especially a child.
- Do not pull a mower backward or ride it in reverse unless necessary.

EMPLOYEES SHOULD BE TRAINED TO DRIVE RIDING MOWERS

- Use all required personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times: hearing and head protection, safety glasses, work boots, etc. Avoid wearing jewelry and loose-fitting clothing that can easily become entangled with moving parts.
- Never carry passengers. Riding mowers are one-person machines.
- Always start the mower from the driver’s seat. Never start the machine while standing beside it. Keep both feet on the machine at all times while it is running.

- Never place the mower in motion until a worker is ready. Putting the mower in gear unintentionally could make it jerk forward without warning.
- Never mount or dismount a mower while it is running, as there may be enough space for an operator’s toes to pass under the mower housing and be struck by the blade. Perform proper shutdown procedures before dismounting.
- Never stop or start a riding mower suddenly when it is going uphill or downhill. Avoid all sudden starts, stops, or turns.

Drive Defensively

The safe operation of a riding mower is similar to the safe operation of a motor vehicle – drive defensively and expect the unexpected. Employers should train workers to operate the mower as if there were no roll-over protective structure (ROPS) in place.

Retraining/Evaluation are necessary to ensure that workers maintain their competency to operate a riding mower safely. Provide refresher training to workers when:

- An operator has been observed operating a mower in an unsafe manner.
- An operator has suffered an injury or been involved in a near-miss incident.
- An operator receives a new job assignment that includes operating a mower or machinery with which the operator is unfamiliar.
- An operator receives a new job assignment that includes mowing on terrain or surfaces that present hazard unfamiliar to the operator.

FINAL WORD

Lawn-Mowers and Riding Lawn Mowers are not toys. They are machines that have sent untold numbers of children to emergency words with serious and life threatening injuries. Improper use of riding motors have even caused fatalities.