# Riding Lawn Mowers – Landscaping Meeting Kit

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Many injuries including deaths have been caused by accidents that occurred in the workplace involving riding lawn mower operations.

## WHAT'S THE DANGER

**Injuries sustained by workers involving riding lawn mowers range from small cuts and burns to major amputations including fatalities from rollovers.**

**Common hazards in riding lawn mower operations include:**

- Cuts or amputations from blades
- Catching fingers, clothing, or jewellery in pinch points or wrap points
- Burns from hot points
- Cuts, abrasions, and bruises from being struck by projectiles to eyes, face
- Major injuries or death from rollover
- Fire and spills when refuelling
- Prolonged noise exposure

**Incident example**

- A co-worker suffered a disfiguring facial injury when the operator of a riding mower failed to clear the area of debris before starting. The blade propelled a rock at high velocity, striking the worker in the cheek, causing a facial fracture and large laceration.

# HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

**Initial Riding Lawn Mower Safety Checklist**

- Make sure you are familiar with the mower and its safe use.
- Make sure you are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE), including steel-toe footwear, hearing protection, and safety eyewear.
- Wear full-length, close-fitting clothing and a hat.
- Check that the mower is in good operating order. Make sure blades are sharp, nuts and bolts are tight, safety guards are in place, the motor is running smoothly, the brakes are working, and operator-present controls are working correctly.
- emove debris, look for holes, and check slopes and ground quality.

**On the Job**

- Look to see if anyone else is in or around the work area. Never assume people will stay where you last saw them. Stop the motor if anyone enters the area.
- Make sure the transmission is out of gear and the mower blade clutch is disengaged before starting the engine.
- Keep your hands and feet away from moving parts and discharge openings.
- Don’t carry passengers.
- Only work in daylight.
- Don’t drive too close to creeks, ditches, or embankments.
- Disengage mower blade when crossing, walks, or gravel lanes.
- Don’t mow in reverse unless it is specifically recommended in the operator’s manual.
- Turn the mower off whenever you are not sitting on the seat.
- Shut down safely: Park on level ground, disengage power to the mower, set the brake, turn off the engine.

**Slopes**

- When using under- or rear-mount mowers, mow down slopes

rather than across.
- When using side-mount, offset, or sicklebar mowers, mow across slopes with the mower on the uphill side.
- If you can’t back up a hill, it’s too steep and you should not mow it.
- If you feel uncomfortable on a slope, don’t mow it.
- Make sure there is good traction.
- Don’t mow near steep drop-offs, ditches, or embankments.

**Refuelling**

- Refuel outdoors on the ground.
- Turn off the engine and allow it to cool before refuelling.
- Extinguish all ignition sources (for example, cigarettes).
- Use only an approved gasoline container in good condition.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the fuel tank.
- If you spill fuel on your clothes, change immediately.
- Never overfill the tank.
- Replace the cap and tighten it securely.

**Loading and unloading riding mowers**

- Work in pairs – one person should operate the mower and the other should provide direction.
- Make sure the truck or trailer is secured against movement. Use chocks or blocking for trucks or trailers.
- If it’s a tilt-and-load truck, position the load deck on the ground.

**Responsibilities of Employers**

- Maintain and repair riding mowers.
- Train workers on the safe use of riding mowers before they start work.
- Demonstrate how to use and store the mower.
- Demonstrate how the safety features work like guards, shields, and automatic releases.
- Demonstrate how to lock out the equipment before clearing any jams or performing repairs or maintenance.
- Remind workers about the PPE they are required to wear.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

# FINAL WORD

It is important for riding mower operators to understand the risks associated with mowing operations. Operators should never operate a riding mower without proper training.