

# Landscaping

## Landscaping - Riding Lawn Mowers

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## What are some hazards associated with using riding lawn mowers?

Hazards include:

- Parts of the body coming into contact with the mower blade(s).
- Being hit by objects thrown by rotating mower blade(s). When objects such as stones are struck by mowers blades, they can be thrown at speeds of up to 91 metres per second (300 feet per second) or 330 kilometres per hour (200 miles per hour).
- Burns caused by touching a muffler or cylinder that has not been given enough time to cool.
- Fires caused by refueling while the engine is still hot.
- Noise-induced hearing loss after long-term exposure to the sound of the mower
- Being unaware of surroundings, including running into bystanders when backing up because operator did not look behind the mower.
- Roll overs that may pin the operator or cause contact with the mower's blades.

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## What are some safety tips when using riding lawn mowers?

### Training

- Read, understand, and follow the instructions in the manufacturer's manual for maintenance and safe operation.
- Ensure your supervisor has fully trained you on how to operate the mower. Your supervisor should demonstrate how to use the mower, and observe you working with it until satisfied that you can operate it safely.
- Be aware of the mower's safety features, including how to stop the mower quickly in case of an emergency.
- Test ride the machine and become familiar with it before engaging the mower blade.

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

- Wear close-fitting clothes to avoid clothing being caught in the moving parts of the mower, and sturdy, non-slip safety toe footwear (no bare feet, sandals or sneakers )
- Portable music players are not recommended since they could distract you from noticing potential safety hazards.
- Check that the mower is equipped with a rollover protective structure (ROPS) and a seat belt. If not, have it retrofitted for one. For example, in Ontario, tractors over 20 horsepower require a ROPS.

### **Preparing the work area**

- Clear the work area of debris, sticks, stones, toys, etc. that could be thrown by the blades.
- Check the work area for immovable objects such as pipes or partially buried rocks that could cause damage to your mower or parts could break and become a projectile.
- Keep people and pets away from the work area. Children may not understand the dangers of the mower and the operator may not be able to hear them approaching over the sound of the mower.
- Ensure grass is dry. Wet grass may cause the mower's tires to lose traction and slide. Wet grass can also clump and clog the discharge chute.

### **Preparing the mower**

- Maintain mower and attachments in good operating condition. An annual inspection by an experienced technician is a good idea.
- Keep safety devices and guards in place. The operator-presence switch should stop the mower immediately when you release the control.
- Inspect the mower before starting. Make certain that all blades are sharp and secure. Check the blade-mounting bolts frequently for tightness. Damaged blades can cause vibration, and vibration can loosen the blades.

- Check grass catcher bags for wear. Replace worn bags.
- Check that the power take- off, mower input driveline, drive belts, chains, and gears are all properly guarded. Repair or replace if necessary.
- Only refuel with gasoline when the mower is turned off and the engine is cool to reduce the risk of a flash fire. Do not smoke when refueling.
- Restart engine at least 8 metres (25 feet) from where you refueled to avoid igniting vapours.
- Store gasoline safely – in an area that is cool, dry, well-ventilated, out of direct sunlight and away from heat and ignition sources, secure and separate from work areas .

## **Mowing tips**

- Mow only in daylight.
- Run the engine at the lowest speed that will do the job (reduces force of thrown objects). A slower speed is a safer speed.
- Set mower at the highest cutting point when operating on rough ground before starting the mower.
- Disengage all attachment clutches and shift mower into neutral before attempting to start the engine.
- Only start the mower when seated in the driver's seat.
- When backing up, look behind the mower for children, pets, or obstructions. Back up only minimal distances.
- Mow straight up and down slopes rather than sideways for greater stability and reduce risk of rolling over (unless mower is counter-balanced).
- Reduce speed on slopes and when making sharp turns to prevent tipping or loss of control.
- Watch for rocks, holes and other hazards, including tree limbs or shrubs that are at eye level.
- Stop and inspect the blades and shaft if the mower runs into a rock or stump.
- Keep the discharge chute pointed away from people, animals, buildings, streets, or vehicles.
- Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
- Empty the grass catcher when it is partially full to reduce strain on your back when lifting the catcher.

There are many tips in other [Landscaping](#) OSH Answers documents.

## What should I be aware of when pulling loads?

Pull loads as follows:

- Use approved hitch points.
  - Limit load weight and size to what is recommended by the mower's manufacturer.
  - Do not turn sharply.
  - Use counterweights as recommended by manufacturer.
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## Before making any repairs or adjustments, what should I do?

Before leaving operator's position or making any repairs or adjustments, disengage power to attachments and stop the motor by:

- setting the brakes;
- putting the transmission in park, if possible;
- turning off the ignition and removing the ignition key; and
- disconnect the spark plug to insure that the engine cannot start for any reason.

If you cannot avoid stopping on a slope, place chocks in front and behind a "drive" wheel to prevent the mower from moving unexpectedly.

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## What should I avoid doing when using a riding lawn mower?

- Do not bypass, disconnect, or remove the mower's safety features or controls.
- Do not use mower on a very steep slope. The mower may tip or roll over, causing serious injury.
- Do not leave mower on a slope.
- Do not stop or start suddenly when going uphill or downhill.
- Do not drive too close to a creek or ditch.
- Do not remove grass catcher or unclog discharge chute with the motor running.
- Do not mount or dismount while the mower is running. There is sufficient space for your toes to pass under the mower housing and be struck by a blade.
- Do not leave a lawn mower unattended if the engine is running (even if the blade is not turning).

- Do not alter or tie-up the guard or deflector on the discharge chute. This deflector prevents objects from flying out at fast speeds.
- Do not carry passengers, even when you are not mowing.
- Do not run the engine indoors to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide gas buildup.
- Do not touch hot motor parts.

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