

# LAWN MOWER

## Safety

LAWNS, YARDS, AND RURAL HOMESTEADS ARE THE LIVING AND PLAYING

AREAS FOR FAMILIES. THESE OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES ARE

FULL OF FUN, EXCITEMENT, AND ADVENTURE FOR CURIOUS

CHILDREN. YET, DANGER MAY LURK FOR

UNSUSPECTING FAMILIES. ACCORDING

TO THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT

SAFETY COMMISSION, YEARLY

INJURIES (TREATED

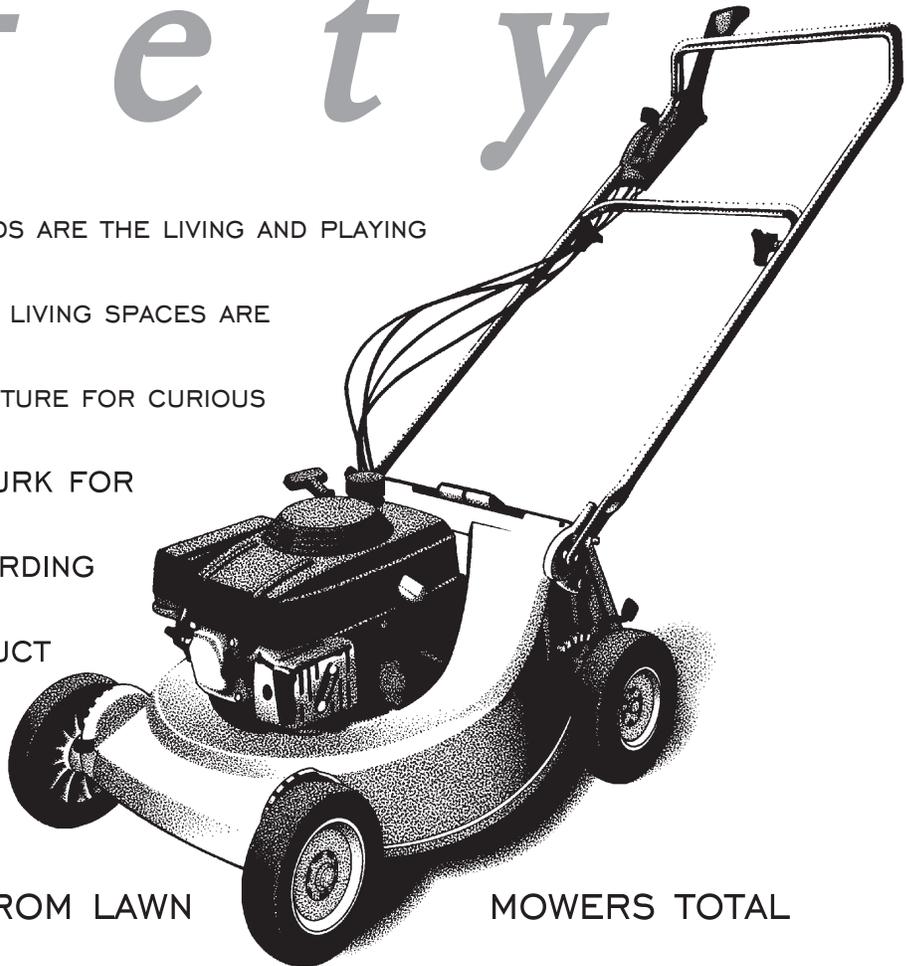
AT EMERGENCY ROOMS) FROM LAWN

MORE THAN 70,000 PER YEAR. MORE THAN 20,000 PEOPLE,

INCLUDING 800 SMALL CHILDREN, ARE INJURED ANNUALLY

WITH RIDING LAWN MOWERS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ELIMINATE AS

MANY OF THOSE DANGERS TO CHILDREN AS POSSIBLE.



### **PRACTICING CAUTION**

An extra rider on a mower is an invitation to trouble! Never ask someone, “Do you want to ride?” Instead, say, “It is time to go inside!”

Each year, injuries and deaths occur because

children ride as passengers on riding mowers, small tractors, and other machinery. Spend quality time with your family in a safe activity. A few minutes of fun riding is not worth the risk of permanent injury or death.

Before beginning to mow, send small children and pets inside with an adult or older brother, sister, or sitter. The revolving blade of a lawn mower can throw objects at speeds of 200 miles per hour or the length of a football field in 1 second. There is no time to dodge thrown objects. It takes an adult about two-thirds of a second to react to danger, and young children may react slower.



PICK UP OBJECTS AND GET CHILDREN INSIDE BEFORE MOWING

## PREPARING TO MOW

Before you mow, pick up objects lying on the lawn. Toys, tools, tires, car parts, cans, bottles, rocks, sticks, twigs, and limbs are hazards to children playing on the lawn even when a mower is not operating. These items also present great danger to the operator, bystanders, and the mower when mowing begins.

## MENTAL ABILITY

Safe mowing requires knowledge, judgment, and maturity. To operate a lawn mower safely, you must have the mental ability to do the following:

- Read the operator's manual.
- Understand how to operate the equipment.
- Follow the manufacturer's safety instructions.
- Make informed decisions in an emergency.
- Accept the responsibility to protect trees and shrubs, pets, humans, automobiles, and homes in the area from danger or damage from the mower.



NEVER STORE GASOLINE NEAR A HOT WATER HEATER

## PHYSICAL ABILITY

Some mowers require great physical strength to operate the controls. Young children may not be able to reach the controls or move them to their full range of operation. Push mowers may require more physical effort than some children can sustain for long periods.

Mower operators must have the physical ability to do the following:

- Reach and operate the controls.
- Reach the handles.
- Push a push mower.

## DRESSING SAFELY FOR MOWING

Clothing protects the mower operator from thrown objects and sun exposure. Earplugs protect hearing from the engine's and blades' loud noises. Safety glasses or goggles protect the eyes from dust, dirt, trash, and small rocks thrown by the blade and the engine-cooling fan.

Never wear anything that can be caught in the machine such as loose clothing or jewelry. Always tie back long hair. Following is a checklist of appropriate clothes and supplies to use to protect yourself while mowing:

- Long pants
- Close-fitting clothes
- Sturdy shoes
- Safety glasses
- Sun protection
- Earplugs or muffs



MOWER OPERATOR DISPLAYING APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

## HANDLING GASOLINE

Gasoline is extremely explosive. One gallon of gasoline has the explosive power of 33 sticks of dynamite. Flash fires can occur when refilling mowers that are hot or that are still operating. Careless smokers also can start flash fires.

Remember the following rules for handling gasoline safely:

- Fill before starting.
- Don't spill when you fill.
- Never refill a hot engine.
- Never remove a gasoline cap with the engine operating.

- Store gasoline in an approved and labeled container, never in food containers.
- Do not smoke near gasoline.
- Do not get near fires with gasoline.
- Never store gasoline in a home or a utility building, especially near gas hot water heaters.

## OPERATING THE MOWER SAFELY

A mower discharge should never be turned in the direction of people, pets, homes, streets, or automobiles. Never allow anyone to sit, stand, or play where grass is being thrown from the mower.

Pulling a mower backwards is unsafe. Push the mower across a slope to lessen the chance of your foot going under the mower. Operate a riding mower up and down steep slopes to reduce the chance of the mower overturning. A riding mower may overturn if it begins spinning on the uphill side of a slope. If the uphill mower wheel spins when going across a slope, stop or turn down the slope immediately.



OPERATE A RIDING MOWER UP AND DOWN A STEEP SLOPE



NEVER GO ACROSS A STEEP SLOPE ON A RIDING MOWER



MOWER DISCHARGE FACING IN THE CORRECT DIRECTION, AWAY FROM WINDOW

If grass is wet, it may clog the discharge. You are also more likely to slip. A slip on wet grass or soil could cause your foot to slip under the mower, into the blade.

Remember the following rules when operating a mower:

- Always push, not pull, a push mower.
- Never mow when the grass is wet.
- Always keep feet from beneath the mower.
- Push a push mower across a slope.
- Operate a riding mower up and down steep slopes.
- Never leave a mower unattended with the engine operating.

## PARKING THE MOWER

It is critical for safety that you to park the mower properly when the job is complete. Small children find mowers fascinating and like to mimic older siblings and parents. Children may start a mower while copying others and may be unable to stop the mower before injuring someone or causing property damage.

Attachments left in a raised position can pinch or mash feet and hands, or they can even crush an infant. Dry grass and debris can easily ignite from a hot muffler. Children may remove gas tank caps and try to look in, using matches for a light source.

Following are safe practices for parking your mower after using it:

- Lower raised components.
- Stop the engine.
- Remove the key and put it in a secure place.
- Remove all grass and debris.
- Service and clean as needed.
- Lock the storage room or garage.

## MAINTAINING THE EQUIPMENT

Many injuries occur while the mower is being serviced or repaired. Never touch a hot engine, blades, or other moving parts. Always stop the engine before making adjustments to the cutting height or making repairs. Before you use the blade or pull rope to turn the engine while making repairs, remove the spark plug wire; this practice will prevent the accidental starting of the engine. Removing the battery cable on an electric start mower prevents accidental starting.

In order to maintain your lawn mower safely, you must know how to do the following:

- Remove the spark plug wire to prevent accidental starting.
- Check or add the correct amount of oil.

- Fill the tank while not spilling the fuel.
- Check and adjust tire pressures, belts, cutting height, and blades.



FILL THE GAS TANK SAFELY

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Cyberlawn: Safe Operating Tips, Outdoor Power Equipment Institute  
<http://www.opei.org/safemowing/lawnmowers.htm>

Lawn and Garden Safety Education Program, National 4-H Council  
<http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/YCC/Lawn-Ranger/Press-release.htm>

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
<http://www.cpsc.gov/kids/kidsafety/index.html>

Iowa State University Extension Ag Engineering, Farm Safety  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs/sa.htm>

John Deere  
<http://www.johndeere.com>



COPYRIGHT 2002 BY MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE COPIED AND DISTRIBUTED WITHOUT ALTERATION FOR NONPROFIT EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES PROVIDED THAT CREDIT IS GIVEN TO THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE.

By **Herb Willcutt**, Extension Professor and Agricultural Engineer, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.

Publication 1097

Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. JOE H. MCGILBERRY, Director

(2.5M-7-02)