

Information You Can Use to Prevent Accidents & Injuries



Walk-behind rotary mowers are push-type or self-propelled cutting equipment that are either gas or electric powered. They are commonly used on small areas that can't be mowed with larger equipment.

Despite their compact size, walk-behind mowers should always be treated with the same safety considerations as if you were using much larger equipment to do the job. Smaller types of mowing equipment can be dangerous!!

Safety Features

Operator presence control (OPC) system - as mandated by the federal government every new walk behind rotary lawnmower must have an OPC system. This system ensure that the blade(s) come to a complete stop within three seconds after the blade control is released.

Two types of OPCs may be used:

1. Blade brake clutch - the blade stops within 3 seconds while the engine continues to run.
2. Zone system - blade and engine stop within 3 seconds.

Safety Protection for Operators

- Clothing protects the operator from thrown objects and sun exposure. Dress properly for the job wearing long pants and close-fitting clothes. Tie back long hair and don't wear anything that could become entangled in the moving parts of the mower. Always wear sturdy, non-slip soled shoes or boots.
- Safety glasses or goggles protect the eyes from dust, dirt, trash, and small rocks thrown by the blade.
- Earplugs protect hearing from engine and blade noises.
- Don't operate mowing equipment under the influence of medications as they can impair the ability to safely use the equipment.
- Operate the mower while standing upright, not bent over. If mowing for long periods of time, consider wearing anti-vibration gloves or adding padding on the mower handle to reduce vibration to arms and hands.
- Protect hands by wearing gloves when handling blades or other items which may be sharp, contain nicks, or have metal burrs on the edges.
- Shut off the engine and disconnect the spark plug wire when making repairs or adjustments.

Before Operating

- Read the operator's manual to find out where the controls are located and how they function. Every mower is different. Check for additional safety instructions in the operator's manual and know how to stop the machine quickly.

- Before you mow, walk the area and pick up objects lying on the lawn. Tools, cans, bottles, wire, rocks, sticks, twigs, and limbs can be hazards to the operator, bystanders, and the mower itself.
- Check to see if the blades are sharp and not bent, cracked or damaged.
- If blades are in poor condition, replace immediately.
- Check fuel level and engine oil.
- Check mowing height.
- Check for any loose belts or parts.
- Ensure that shields and other guards, such as the rear drag shield and discharge deflector, are in place and working properly. Don't remove or disable guards or other safety devices.

Fueling Safety

- Use the proper type of fuel - gasoline or 2:1 gas/oil mixture.
- Don't overfill the tank and leave room for expansion.
- Don't add any fuel if the engine is still hot.
- Let it cool down before re-fueling. Never light a match or smoke around gasoline.

Keep People at a Safe Distance

- Keep people at a safe distance from the mower while it is operating - at least a 60 foot radius.
- Disengage the blade and shut off the engine when approached by anyone.

Operating Tips

- Never mow wet grass because of the increased risk of operator slippage and clogging of the discharge chute.
- Always turn off the engine and disconnect the spark plug wire, if accessible, before attempting to unclog or work on the mower. Use a stick to remove the clog. Avoid placing your hands near the blade.
- Always shut off the mower when adjusting the mower height.
- Mow at full throttle. Slow down on rough ground and while making turns.
- Watch for hidden hazards such as holes, roots, drain pipes, insects, and low overhead branches. Operators should always watch their footing on slopes. Mow across an incline and never mow an incline that is too steep for balance and control.
- Always push in a forward direction. Use extreme caution when reversing or pulling the mower. Don't remove the grass catcher or unclog the chute while the motor is running.
- Disengage the blades or turn the mower off when crossing gravel, sidewalks, or driveways.
- Mow counterclockwise in most cases to discharge the grass onto the area already mowed. Never blow grass in the direction of bystanders or traffic.
- Stop and inspect the blades and shaft if the mower runs into a large rock or stump. Damaged blades can vibrate and become loose.
- Use grounded extension cords when using an electric-powered mower. Mow away from the cord and unplug it after use.

Shut Down of Machine

- Idle down the engine a few minutes, allowing it to cool down.
- Always clean the mower after use. Don't spray cold water on a hot engine.

Keep Mowers in Peak Operating Condition

- Inspect the mower periodically for potential hazards such as loose belts and missing or damaged guards. Check the mower for accumulations of grass, leaves or excessive grease to reduce fire hazard.
- Get the advice of a mechanic for problems.
- Conduct routine maintenance and inspections.

Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.

