

Public Service Announcement



## Farm Safety – Mowing

Provided by your

**Metcalfe County Emergency Management Office**

### Farm Safety & Health: Mowing Safety

The start of farming season is usually hectic. First of all, there are a lot of chores to complete. And then thrown into the mix are the various holidays, graduations, maybe even crop planting. All this aside, there is the abundant grass to mow. While too much rain can postpone the planting season a little, nothing really prevents grass from growing. And so the mowers come out. Since it is such a common activity, there is a tendency to view lawn mowing as being less hazardous than is really the case. The following is a safety guide explaining how to minimize risk while using a lawn mower.

The blade on the common lawn mower rotates to provide approximately 52 cuts per second. Translated into feet, the tip of the cutting blade of the mower travels about 300 feet in the same second. This is not an amusing fact. Each year, it is not uncommon to read or hear about the individual's foot that was caught underneath a walk-behind mower, the person whose eye got hit by an object thrown by a mower, or the child that was backed over by a riding lawn mower. Increasingly, there seem to be more instances of the larger riding lawn tractors overturning and pinning the operator. Here are a few reminders of techniques for safe operation with a walk-behind mower:

1. READ the owner's manual - it contains information about your specific mower.
2. Wear proper clothing-close fitting clothes and shoes with toes and traction soles (preferably leather).
3. Eye protection is always recommended.
4. Ear protection will reduce the level of noise heard.
5. Clear the area to be mowed of debris that may be thrown - the same updraft that helps raise the grass for better mowing also helps to pick up objects.
6. Keep children and other bystanders away from the mowing area.
7. Mow in a FORWARD direction - more difficult at times but safer.
8. When mowing on a slope mow ACROSS the slope with a walk-behind mower - this keeps a better distance between you and mower in case of a slip.
9. Wait till the grass is dry before mowing - very difficult to do in years such as this. When the grass is growing rapidly, there is typically more grass left from the previous cutting. This retains moisture and causes slips. This is in addition to the lack of traction normally available on wet grass.
10. ALWAYS shut off the mower before adjusting or clearing clogs.
11. Allow the mower to cool before refueling. Use only approved safety containers to store fuel.

For riding mowers, follow the above recommendations except for #9. For riding lawn mowers, always mow UP and DOWN the slope.

The other considerations that need to be followed with riding mowers, in addition to the above, are:

1. NEVER carry passengers.
2. Remove the ignition key after each use.
3. Use age 10 as a guideline to allow youth to operate riding mowers. It is not until this age that many youths have developed the cognitive and motor abilities needed for safe operation. Even at this age, adult supervision is a necessity. The experience gained by safely and successfully operating a riding lawn mower can provide a solid base for operating larger equipment and vehicles in the future.
4. Use a 15% slope as the maximum to attempt to mow. For a man of 5'8", this would translate conservatively into three average steps and the height of the knee. If after taking three steps, you have risen more than the height of your knee, the slope is too steep.
5. Keep all safety devices, switches, guards, and shields in place and working.
6. Before dismounting, shut off the engine and allow attachments to stop moving.