

Summer Safety Issue

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Riding Lawnmower Safety

If you are like many homeowners, you are relying on a riding lawnmower to make quick work of your lawn maintenance. While most people use riding lawnmowers without incident, accidents from unsafe practices do occur.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the risk of an accident with a riding lawnmower is almost twice that of a walk-behind mower. Causes of injuries include blade contact and loss of stability such as tipping, falling under, or being run over by the machine. By keeping in mind the following safety tips, you can avoid riding mower mishaps altogether!

Driver's Safety Basics

- 1) Read, understand, and follow the safety and operating instructions that are in the manual and on the unit.
- 2) Allow only responsible adults familiar with the instructions and proper operating procedures to operate the machine.
- 3) Clear the mowing area of objects such as rocks, toys, wire, sticks, etc. to avoid items being picked up and thrown by the blade.
- 4) Be sure the area is clear of other people before mowing. Stop the mower if anyone

enters the area.

- 5) Never carry a passenger.
- 6) Do not mow in reverse unless unavoidable. Bring the machine to a full stop before shifting to reverse. Always look behind before and while operating in reverse.
- 7) Be aware of discharge direction and do not point it toward anyone.
- 8) Slow down before turning.
- 9) Never leave a running machine unattended. Always turn off the blades, set the parking brake, stop the engine, and remove the keys before dismounting.
- 10) Turn off blades and attachments when not mowing.
- 11) Stop the engine before removing the grass catcher or unclogging the chute.
- 12) Mow only in daylight or in very good artificial light.
- 13) Do not operate the machine while under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including medication for colds, etc.).

Boating Safety

Boating is a wonderful activity the entire family can enjoy. Water sports, relaxing in the sun, and splashing in the water are great ways to make memories. However, water lovers must be careful in order to ensure their getaways are safe ones.

General Precautions

- Dock at a marina that has stand pipes, fire extinguishers, good lighting, surveillance cameras and security measures in place.
- Always wear personal flotation devices (PFDs) when on the water – especially children and non-swimmers.
- Never swim near a marina; boaters cannot see you when they are docking.
- Wear non-slip shoes on the boat and dock.
- When leaving your boat, turn off portable heaters on board.
- Keep your boat in good condition, with all equipment meeting safety standards in your area.

Electrical and Fuel Precautions

- Do not use extension cords at the dock, and only use approved cord sets and connectors. Do not use cord sets with burn markings or power pedestals that cannot connect tightly with your cord set.



14) Watch for traffic when operating near or crossing roadways.

Slope Do's and Don'ts

All slopes require extra caution; they are a major factor in tipover and loss-of-control accidents. A good rule of thumb is that if you cannot back up the slope or if you feel uneasy on it, do not mow it!

- ✓ Mow up and down slopes, not across.
- ✓ Watch for holes, ruts or bumps. Uneven terrain could cause the mower to overturn. Tall grass can hide obstacles. Use a slow speed and shift into a lower gear before going on a slope; the gear should be low enough so that you do not have to stop or shift while on the slope.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for wheel weights or counterweights to improve stability.
- ✓ Use extra care with grass catchers or other attachments – these can change the stability of the mower. Do not use on very steep slopes or rough terrains. Empty grass catcher bags when they are only partially full.
- ✓ Keep all movement on slopes slow and gradual. Avoid sudden changes in speed and direction.
- ✓ Avoid starting or stopping on a slope. If tires

lose traction, disengage the blades and proceed slowly straight down the slope.

- ✓ Do not turn on the slope unless unavoidable; then, with the blades disengaged, turn slowly and gradually downhill.
- ✓ Do not mow near drop-offs, ditches or embankments. A wheel over the edge or an edge caving in could cause sudden overturn.
- ✓ Do not mow wet grass; reduced traction can cause sliding.
- ✓ Do not try to stabilize the machine by putting your foot on the ground.

Children's Safety

Children are often attracted to riding lawnmower activity, but serious accidents can occur if you are not alert of their presence. Never allow children to operate the mower, and keep small children out of the mowing area. Stop mowing if they enter the area. Before and when operating in reverse, look behind and down for small children. Finally, use extra care when approaching corners, shrubs, and trees.

One final word of advice: Service your mower annually to keep it in tip-top shape. ■

BOATING SAFETY CONTINUED

- Ensure the marina has the proper power voltage for your boat.
- Disconnect power at the dock pedestal before connecting or disconnecting your boat.
- Add fuel to portable tanks on the dock only; never while on the boat.
- Inform the marina staff immediately if you spill gas; do not try and clean it up yourself.

Docking Tips

- Use forward and reverse at an idle speed when docking and moving your boat near the marina.
- Have bumpers, mooring lines and boat hooks ready beforehand.
- Keep all body parts in the boat until you have come to a complete rest.
- Tie the line that holds the boat against the wind first.

Causes of Boat Fires

Boaters should also be aware of fire dangers. Top causes of boat fires include electrical malfunctions, unattended portable heaters, poor housekeeping, electrical wiring done by a non-professional, mishandling gas, oil and petroleum appliances, and fuel and pipelines in poorly ventilated areas.

Fire Prevention Techniques

- Have fire extinguishers in good working order on board, and fit smoke detectors to the cabin. Place fire blankets near the cooker.
- Inspect fuel hoses, containers, wiring and appliances on a regular basis.
- Ventilate the engine before starting, and turn off the engine and all cooking appliances before fueling.
- While changing LPG cylinders, ensure the valve on the cylinder is off before disconnecting it.

If you have a fire on your boat, blast your air horn five times, pause, and repeat. Make sure the electrical shore is turned off, and leave the boat and call 911. ■

Celebrating with Fireworks the Safe Way

Fireworks are a favorite way for many to celebrate the summer. However, they can be extremely dangerous unless proper precautions are taken.

- Read and follow all safety instructions and warnings.
- Only light fireworks outside in an open space, and light one at a time. Ensure the area is clear of people and pets before you do, and never light them in a glass or metal container.
- Obey local laws regarding the private use of fireworks.
- Have a bucket of water or hose ready for emergencies.
- Do not try to relight a "dud" that did not go off the first time – let it sit for 20 minutes and then soak in water.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry area.
- Wear protective gear, including gloves and eye protection.
- Do not drink alcohol and light fireworks – have a designated "celebration master!"
- Children should never light fireworks; in fact, sparklers are the only "safe" firework for children over the age of 12, and closely supervise children while they are holding sparklers or are near a fireworks display.

Tips for Pet Owners

- Remember that pets are sensitive to noise; it is a good idea to keep them inside while lighting fireworks.
- Keep pets away from firework debris and matches; they may try to eat the materials.
- Ensure that pets have proper identification – if they get scared and run away from the noise, they will be able to be returned to you easily.
- Have pets go to the bathroom before fireworks activity begins; that way, they will not have an accident later.