



# Tailgate Safety Training for Landscaping and Horticultural Services

Agricultural Safety Program, 590 Woody Hayes Drive, Columbus, OH 43210

## Power Lawn Mowers

**Objective: Operate power lawn mowers according to safety guidelines.**

### *How to Use This Module*

Safe lawn mowing practices can prevent injuries. For this module:

- Read the information below on mowing hazards and safety practices.
- Ask your supervisor to point out the safety devices on mowers you use.
- Ask your supervisor to demonstrate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and lawn mower maintenance.
- Discuss mowing accidents and ways they could have been prevented.
- Review the important points.
- Take the True/False quiz to check your learning.

### Background

A power lawn mower can be dangerous and cause serious injuries. A rotary mower blade whirls at 2,000 and 4,000 revolutions per minute. The tip of the blade travels at 100 to 200 miles per hour. For safety reasons, it is important to know how to quickly disengage the clutch and stop the engine.

**To Operate Any Power Lawn Mower, Follow These Tips:**



- Begin by reading the operator's manual.
- Remove debris from lawn before mowing.
- Wear protective, close-fitting clothing.

- Use hearing protection if indicated by the operator's manual. For more information, refer to the Tailgate Safety Training module *Protecting Against Noise*.
- Take mowers out of gear before starting.
- Keep all guards and safety shields in place.
- Never disengage any safety interlock switch.
- Never fill the gasoline tank on the mower if the engine is hot.
- Store gasoline in an approved, properly labeled container.
- Never store gasoline or any other hazardous material in a food container.
- Turn off the motor before removing a foreign object.
- Disconnect the spark or electric plug before repairing the mower.
- Provide routine maintenance.
- Warn humans and pets to stay away from operating mowers.

### ***Tip for Push Mowers***

- Start push mowers from a firm stance with feet in a safe position.



### ***Tip for Electric Mowers***

- Never use an electric mower on wet grass.

### ***Tips for Riding Mowers***

- Keep both feet on the footrests of a riding mower.
- Turn off the motor before dismounting.
- No extra riders on self-propelled mowers. For more information, refer to the Tailgate Safety Training module *No Riders on Lawn Equipment*.
- Be aware of power-take-offs. For more information, see the Tailgate Safety Training module *Safe Use of the Power-Take-Off (PTO)*.

### **Be Aware of Mowing Hazards**

- A mower can tip over easily.
- Push the mower away from the body during a fall.
- Never leave a running mower unattended.
- Take rest periods as needed. For more information, refer to the Tailgate Safety Training module *Heat Stress*.
- Foreign objects can fly from the mower, so make sure the mowing area, including the throwing distance of the blade, is clear of people and animals.

## Proper Mowing Directions

- When mowing on a slope with a riding mower, you should mow down the slope.
- When mowing on a slope with a push mower, you should mow across the slope.

## Proper Dress for Mowing

- Sturdy shoes are a must; steel-toed work boots are advised.
- Long pants and long-sleeve shirts protect from flying debris, grass clippings, and sun.
- Safety glasses or goggles, especially when mowing near solid objects like gravel driveways.
- Hearing protection may be necessary.

## Review These Important Points

- A rotary blade whirls between 2,000 and 4,000 revolutions per minute, with tip speeds between 100 to 200 miles per hour.
- Wear protective, snug clothing when mowing.
- Keep guards and safety shields in place.
- Never disengage any safety interlock switch.
- Turn off the mower before removing any foreign objects.
- Know how to disengage the clutch and stop the engine.
- Never leave a running mower unattended.

## About These Modules

The author team for the training modules in the landscape and horticultural tailgate training series includes Dee Jepsen, Program Director, Agricultural Safety and Health, Ohio State University Extension; Michael Wonacott, Research Specialist, Vocational Education; Peter Ling, Greenhouse Specialist; and Thomas Bean, Agricultural Safety Specialist. Modules were developed with funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number 46E3-HT09.

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Answer Key: 1 = T, 2 = T, 3 = F, 4 = T, 5 = T.

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*Name* \_\_\_\_\_

### True or False?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. An improperly used power lawn mower can cause serious injuries.     | T | F |
| 2. The tip speed of a rotary mower blade is 100 to 200 miles per hour. | T | F |
| 3. Do not turn off a lawn mower to remove foreign objects.             | T | F |
| 4. Carefully inspect the lawn for debris and remove it before mowing.  | T | F |
| 5. Keep lawn mower guards and shields in place at all times.           | T | F |