

Loss Prevention News

Provided by the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool

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It's the Season for Tractor Mower Safety

It's that time to mow and review safe operating procedures. Workers are injured and killed each year in mowing accidents. The following should be reviewed with tractor mower operators.

Incident #1

While operating a tractor-mower, a public works employee was seriously injured when the tractor-mower slipped off the edge of the creek embankment and rolled over into the creek causing the employee to be pinned underneath the water.



A co-worker saw the incident happen and immediately rushed to help. The employee was unconscious and trapped underwater by his seatbelt. The co-worker pulled the employee above the water and cut the seatbelt, which freed him.

The co-worker was also operating a tractor-mower when he spotted the incident. During his initial response to save the employee, he jumped off his tractor, which also rolled into the creek, narrowly missing them.

By not recognizing the safety issues that the slope provided, the employee was seriously injured as a result of the tractor-mower overturning off the edge of the creek bank.

Incident #2

An operator was mowing with a tractor pulling a brush hog when some heavy debris got caught in the blade, stopping it. It appeared that the machine's 'power takeoff' device had been turned off. The worker got off the tractor and tried freeing the debris from underneath the blade. When the operator pulled on the debris, he was pulled underneath the blade and killed. The operator was known to be very efficient and always showed good mowing techniques.

Reminders:

Be aware of the safety issues with equipment. All operators should be familiar

with the operator's manual. Ensure that equipment operators received training of the proper operating procedures and safe work practices. The equipment, warning decals, and operator's manual should be reviewed by the tractor-mower operators to ensure that safe operating procedures are followed.

Inspect areas in which mobile equipment is to be operated prior to performing the work to identify and control actual and potential hazards. Examples of hazards to look for include heavy debris, holes, obstructions, and slopes. Operators should not be left alone when operating in high hazard areas.

Operators should be familiar with how to mow in sloped areas and avoid operating tractor-mowers on **wet** or **slick** sloped surfaces to reduce the potential for injury or death.

Wear the proper personal protective equipment such as safety glasses, hard hat, gloves, hearing protection, safety shoes, sunscreen, filter mask, and proper clothing. Eye injuries are very common and can easily be prevented with safety glasses, but they must be worn.

Personnel should stay clear of rotating drivelines. Never try to remove debris or get close to the machine blades without making sure the mower is fully shut off and all shut down procedures have been followed.

When mowing in hot weather, employees should drink plenty of water and take adequate breaks to prevent the possibility of heat stress and heat stroke. Workers should inform their supervisors if they have a condition or take medications that affect their ability to operate machinery or be in the heat for prolonged periods.

Operators should never allow passengers on mowers. Mowing should be away from bystanders and vehicles where debris discharged from the mower could cause injury. Equipment should not be left running unattended.

Seatbelts on equipment must always be used. Not wearing a seatbelt puts the

operator at risk of serious injury and death.

When the machine requires service, machine elements must be properly and securely supported when raised, using jack stands designed for the purpose.

TML-IRP Media Library has safety videos on mowing safety, including *Right-of-Way Mowing Safety*. This video helps train new operators to conduct pre-start inspections and reminds experienced operators before they begin another mowing season. The program is divided into two parts, pre-start and on-the-job operation. Included is a discussion of guards, shields and other safety

devices. Scenarios include rollover accidents, working around high-speed traffic, and crossing highways. DVD #679, VHS #17.



Visit our website at www.tmlirp.org and look for the "Loss Prevention Quick Links" on the left side of the page to check out videos from the Loss Prevention Media Library, or call 800-537-6655 and ask for the Loss Prevention Department.

Resources

TML-IRP Loss Prevention Department
Loss Prevention Safety Training
and Resources
Austin, TX
1-800-537-6655
www.tmlirp.org

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
Free Safety & Health Publications
<http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/safety/index.html>

Oklahoma State University
Environmental Health & Safety
<http://ehs.okstate.edu/links/tractor.htm>
(Links to Tractor and Mower Safety)