



LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN

Lawn Mower & Weed Eater Safety

Fact: In 2008, 247,000 Americans were treated for lawnmower-related injuries.

Owning and operating a lawn mower or weed eater can be very convenient. However, at the same time, mowers and weed eaters present certain dangers if you do not know how to properly operate them or the proper precautions necessary to protect yourself and the people around you.

General Safety Precautions

Prior to operating your mower or weed eater, you should first read and understand the operator's manual. This will give you basic knowledge of how the tool works and proper operating instructions. You should also take time to consider the appropriate protective clothing. These items should include:

- Ear and eye protection.
- Gloves to protect hands from injury.
- Thick footwear with good traction.
- Long pants and a long-sleeve shirt that is somewhat tight fitting.

Prior to starting the machine, make sure that other people and pets are a safe distance away. Next, make sure that there are no sticks, stones, wire or any other debris in the lawn that could become a propelled object. Inspect the machine to ensure that all of the guards, shields and belts are in their proper place and in good working condition.

Fuel your equipment cautiously, and make sure the fuel is stored in an appropriate container away from ignition sources. Never attempt to fuel a weed eater or mower while it is running, still hot from running or in the vicinity of an ignition source (including people who are smoking). Keep all body parts away from exhaust areas, as they will reach extreme temperatures quickly.

If you need to make any repairs or adjustments, make sure that the engine is turned off and the spark plug is disconnected before you begin working. Lastly, if anyone else will be operating the weed eater or lawn mower, make sure that they have been trained properly in how to use it.

Lawn Mower Safety Precautions

There are four main types of lawn mower accidents of which you should be aware: overturns, propelled objects, coming in contact with the rotating blade and running over a victim with a riding lawn mower. To help avoid accidents, there are some simple precautions that you, the operator, can take.

- Before you engage the blade, make sure that you know how to operate all aspects of the mower. This may include taking a test drive first.
- Never allow passengers on a riding lawn mower. This is true even for the larger

(over)

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commercial riding lawn mowers.

- When at all possible, move forward and not backward. Many new mowers have a safety device that disengages the blade when you travel backwards. If you do have to go backwards, pay special attention to potential hazards and holes in the yard.
- Never point the discharge chute at others. You never know when you might run over a rock or other debris in the yard; these items can easily injure someone if propelled by a mower.
- Never leave the mower running unattended.
- Disengage the blade prior to getting off of the machine. Many newer models have safety devices that will automatically disengage the blade when the operator gets up from the seat; however, it is still important to listen for the blade shutting off prior to stepping off the mower. If you do not hear the blade disengage, take the time to manually shut it off.
- Turn the mower off prior to repairs or maintenance.
- When mowing on a slope, use caution, slow down and avoid making sharp turns. It is usually safer to mow a steep slope up and down on a riding mower and across with a push mower. However, never mow a slope that is so steep your tires or feet have no traction.
- Only operate a riding mower from the driver's seat.

Weed Eater Safety Precautions

- When fueling your weed eater, make sure that you have the correct fuel mixture. Most weed eaters take a mixture of fuel and two-cycle engine oil.
- When you start your weed eater, make sure that you have good balance and footing. Hold the machine with two hands, and make sure that you are in an open area.
- The cutting part of the weed eater should never go above waist height.
- The speed of the string should never be faster than what is required to cut the vegetation.
- Do not operate a weed eater in the immediate vicinity of others; debris from a weed eater can fly over 30 feet.
- Keep in mind that it is better to weed eat an embankment or slope, rather than trying to mow it.
- When you have completed your weed eating, let the machine idle for a few minutes to cool down before you shut it off.

The sights and smells of a freshly mowed yard can be very gratifying, yet it is essential it is done safely to protect yourself and others.



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