



# The Lone Star

**Agricultural Safety & Health Newsletter**  
Biological & Agricultural Engineering Department - Texas A&M University

## Lawn Mowers

### Objective:

Teach participants lawn mowing techniques and principals of safety to make them more aware of the hazards presented by this chore.

### After this Lesson the Students Should be Able to:

1. Identify some of the hazards associated with lawn mowers and mowing techniques.
2. Understand safety features of newer lawn mowers and their importance.
3. Describe the proper clothing and protective equipment to use while mowing.
4. Recognize the importance of proper training for the safe use of lawn mowers.
5. Identify additional safety training programs for lawn mower operation.

### Procedure:

1. Assemble the following materials: An older style lawn mower without blade brake or clutch, newer style lawn mowers with blade brake clutch, items that may be found in the yard (rocks, glass, wire, etc.), newspaper articles about people injured in lawn mower-related accidents, examples of protective gear that should be used while mowing (e.g., safety glasses or ear protection) and a sling shot.
2. Place mowers at a convenient location for viewing.
3. Arrange sample materials for participants to view.
4. Ask participants how many of them mow the lawn.
5. Poll participants to see how many use mowers such as those on display.
6. Point out the safety features of both the older and newer mowers.
7. Poll participants to see how many have seen mowers with the safety features disassembled. Stress the importance of leaving safety features intact on mowers and of keeping them in good working condition.
8. Ask participants to list some safety procedures for mowers and discuss them. (Leaders list them on chalkboard while participants brainstorm; leaders can help fill in the gaps). Be sure to include:
  - Keep hands and feet away from the blade area. (Explain that the average reaction time is .75 seconds, which would result in approximately 40 cuts.)
  - Mow back and forth on side of steep hill with push mower.

- With a riding mower up and down a hill.
- Always pick up sticks, stones and other debris from the yard before mowing. (Point out that if an object were struck just right, it could be propelled from the mower at just under 200 miles per hour. Use the sling shot to demonstrate the potential for injuries by shooting sample rocks, glass, wire.)
- Keep all shields in place.
- Keep mower in good condition.
- Wear proper clothing (long pants, hard shoes, safety glasses, ear plugs, etc.). Stress the use of other senses when ear plugs are worn, as possible injuries could result from not being able to hear someone approaching.
- Learn how to shut mower off. Shut mower off and get an adult to help if there is a problem.
- Never mow if adult is not at home.
- Mow only in the daylight.
- Clear the yard/area of people; no playing and no watching. Be sure someone is in charge of young children to keep them out of area.
- Do not pull mower backward toward you.
- Never point discharge chute at anyone (imagine it shooting nails).
- The mower is not a toy, so never chase anyone with it.
- Turn mower off and make sure the blade has stopped before checking or clearing chute.
- Right size for push mower - "tall enough" - push handle should be lower than chest or mower will be pushed up to expose blades.
- Never fill gas tank while engine is hot or running, it could cause fire or explosion. Take a break. Explain hazards of gasoline vapors.

9. Demonstrate proper mowing techniques.

- Demonstrate hazards of backing up with a push mower.
- Measure 35 feet from mower to show how far items can be thrown.
- Demonstrate disengaging the clutch and shifting into neutral on a riding mower. Stress the importance of doing this before starting the mower.
- Discuss mowing steep slopes:
  - a. Sideways (back and forth) with a push mower.
  - b. Vertically (up and down) with a riding mower.

10. Introduce an accident victim(s) (if possible). Have them tell their story and encourage participants to ask questions.