

Safety Note #27

POWER LAWN MOWER SAFETY



Consumer Product Safety Commission data indicate a total of approximately 22,000 people were treated in hospitals for power lawn mower injuries during 2009. Injuries included amputated fingers and toes, contusions, foreign objects in the eye, and strains and sprains. Many of the injuries were caused by operator inattention or inexperience. California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 8, Section 3563 identifies the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) safety standards that all the power lawnmowers used in the workplace must meet, as well as requirements, for safe operation and training. **Video E-082 Groundskeeping Safety is available from the ANR Environmental Health and Safety Library at <http://safety.ucanr.org>.**

Summary of California Code of Regulations Title 8, Section 3563 Training Requirements

- Supervisors shall ensure power lawn mower operators are competent to operate mowers safely, as demonstrated by the successful completion of training and evaluation.
- All operator training and evaluation shall be conducted by qualified persons who have the knowledge, training, and experience to train and evaluate the competence of power lawn mower operators.
- Trainees shall only operate a power lawn mower under the direct supervision of qualified persons.
- Training shall consist of a combination of formal instruction (e.g., lecture, discussion, written material, etc.), demonstrations by the trainer, practical exercises by the trainee, and evaluation of the operator's performance.
- Training shall include:
 - Review of the operator's manual, including operating instructions, warnings, and precautions for the types of power lawn mowers the operator will be used.
 - Review of operator controls and instrumentation.
 - Review of all safety devices to ensure guards and shields are kept securely in place.
 - The importance of surveying the terrain for hazards prior to mowing to identify obstacles for ride-on, sit-down mowers.
 - Speed control, steering, and maneuvering the mower.
 - Review of stability and rollover hazards associated with operating riding mowers on various hazardous surfaces, terrains, or areas.
 - The mandatory use of Rollover Protection Structures (ROPS) and seatbelts for riding lawn mowers equipped with ROPS.
- Refresher training and evaluation shall take place when the operator has: 1) Been observed to operate a mower in an unsafe condition; 2) Been involved in an accident or near-miss incident; 3) Received an evaluation indicating the operator is not operating a mower safely; or 4) Received a new job assignment that includes operating an unfamiliar mower or mowing areas that present unfamiliar hazards, such as steep terrain.
- All safety instruction and training shall be documented in accordance with the written Injury Illness Protection Program (IIPP).

Operating Precautions

- Only use the type of mowers that you have been trained for. Always inspect the power lawn mower for damage or disrepair and make sure all shields and guards are securely in place.
- Before using, if a power lawn mower fails the pre-use inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the mower from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.
- Always wear safety glasses or goggles when using a power lawn mower. In addition, hearing protection should also be used since engine noise from a power lawn mower is at about 90 decibels.
- Wear long pants and sturdy shoes (i.e., no sneakers or sandals) when using a power lawn mower. Do not wear loose clothing.
- Always start a power lawn mower outside. Do not operate a power lawn mower inside an enclosed space (i.e., sheds or garages) where carbon monoxide exhaust gas can accumulate.
- Prior to starting, inspect the area to be mowed and pick up all loose objects (i.e., sticks, stones, pieces of glass/metal, etc.) that could be thrown by the power lawn mower.
- Never fuel the power lawn mower when the engine/muffler is hot. Use a rag to wipe up small fuel spills.
- Shut off the power lawn mower engine and disconnect the spark plug wire before performing mechanical adjustments, maintenance, or repairs or clearing/unclogging the discharge chute or underside of the mowing deck.
- Exercise caution when mowing near trees or shrubs with low hanging branches.
- Always shut the power lawn mower off before emptying the grass clippings catch bag.
- Never pull a power lawn mower behind you. Always push the power lawn mower.
- Mow across the slope of a bank or hill.
- Always shut off a power lawn mower before leaving it unattended.