

## Safe Use of Agriculture Mowers

Agricultural machinery accidents, often involving mowers, pose a major problem in California. Better mower designs and protective guarding have reduced the number of accidents in recent years, but accidents still occur. And when they do, they generally cause death or severe mutilation injuries.

### TRUE STORY

A skilled mower operator was cutting tall grass on a tractor mower in the center of peach tree rows. The mower blades caught and shredded a piece of wire in the tall grass, and a two-inch piece of wire thrown from the mower's blade struck the tractor operator in the back of the head.

The tractor operator, found several hours later slumped in his seat, was pronounced dead at the scene.

### What could have prevented this accident?

- The front of the mower should have been guarded.
- The tractor driver should have worn a helmet to protect against flying objects.
- A special protective enclosure should have been installed on the back of the tractor to shield the operator from flying objects.

### Smart Safety Tips

- Know how to operate your mower and its accessories.
- Train all operators before they use a mower. Follow all warnings on the mowers and in the manufacturer's manual.
- Contact the manufacturer for guidance if you modify the mower by removing or adding guards (or make other modifications).
- Keep all protective devices in place and tightly fastened. Confirm that all guards, shields, and safety signs are installed as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Use a special protective enclosure and/or other shielding to protect the operator when chain shields may be less effective and the operator is exposed to thrown objects.

### EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Employer:

- Purchase mowers specifically designed for the work at hand (i.e., brush shredder, weed chopper, etc.).

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- Train all operators how to use and maintain mowers. Develop a system to detect hazardous conditions.
- Provide personal protective equipment and safety devices, such as hard hats, safety glasses, safety shields, and hearing protection.
- Supervise mower operators closely.
- Ensure all guards, shields, and safety signs are installed on the mowers.

#### Employee:

- Know the operating characteristics of each mower you use.
- Never alter or remove safety equipment from the mower.
- Keep others away from your operating zone.
- If you leave a mower unattended, set parking brakes, disengage PTO, shut off engine, remove ignition key, and lower the mower to the ground.
- Never attempt to clear a clogged mower or inspect mower blades while it's operating.
- Inspect the area before you mow it. Look for objects, ditches, potholes, dropoffs, steep slopes, stumps, standing water, etc.
- After starting, check all controls, including steering and braking. If the tractor or mower does not respond properly, do not use until it's repaired.
- Check for excessive vibration and unusual noise. Shut off and inspect the equipment if you detect any sign of trouble.
- Keep clear of all rotating components. Contact can cause wrapping and entanglement, and may result in serious injury or death.
- Never allow anyone else to ride on your tractor or mower.
- Keep hands and feet away from discharge openings. Never direct the mower discharge toward anyone.
- When operating on uneven terrain, maintain minimum ground speed and make wide and gradual turns. Use extreme caution.

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