Lawn mower safety reminders

Source: Joshua Jackson, assistant extension professor, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

The grass is turning green. Soon it will be time to start mowing, if you have not already started. As you rev up your mower’s engine for the first time this spring, here are some reminders to keep you and your family safe.

While mowing your grass may seem like a harmless task, it has its own set of hazards. A 2018 study conducted by John Hopkins researchers analyzed emergency room visits due to lawn mowers accidents from the past eight years. They found that 6,394 Americans are injured in lawn mower accidents each year. Lacerations are the most common injuries followed by fractures and amputations. People most often injure their hands and wrists compared to their toes and feet.

Never allow extra passengers on a riding lawn mower. It is a good idea to have children and pets in the house while you are mowing.

Understand your mower and its safety features. Do not start an unfamiliar mower without first familiarizing yourself with it by reading the owner’s manual or having someone show you how to operate it. Most push mowers have a clutch handle that will quickly shut off the engine and the blade when you take your hands off it. Most riding lawn mowers are equipped with a kill switch located under the seat. This turns off the blade and the mower’s engine when the rider leaves the seat. Riding mowers will not start unless the operator disengages the blade first. Large mowers will have rollover protection structures to prevent rollovers. If your mower has a seat belt, wear it. All of these are important safety features that you should not disable.

Before mowing, make sure your yard is clear of branches or rocks that could become dangerous projectiles if hit by a mower.

Wear the proper clothing including closed-toe, non-skid shoes, long-sleeve shirts and snug pants without strings that could get caught in the mower, eye and ear protection and a hat to protect your head from the sun. If you have long hair, put it in a ponytail.

Do not mow in reverse, as you may not be able to see obstacles behind you.

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