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## Do You Have Lawnmower Safety Tips?

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**A weekly question/answer column**

**Do You Have Lawnmower Safety Tips?**

*Richard Beard\* answers:*

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat more than 60,000 individuals with lawn mower injuries. A majority of the injuries occur in young people under the age of 16 and are mostly attributed to unsafe practices, not equipment malfunctions. To make lawn mowing a safe weekly chore for young people as well as for adults, consider these tips.

- Safety guidelines recommend that children under 12 do not operate power equipment. A person's body size, strength, coordination, experience and maturity affect his or her ability to safely operate a lawnmower.
- Review the operator's manual and the manufacturer's recommendations for safe operation each year before the lawn care season begins. Make sure you know how to stop the lawn mower in an emergency.
- Always wear safety glasses, snug fitting clothes, long pants, and heavy work shoes.
- Mower shields and guards must remain in place and operational to prevent hazards. Never bypass safety kill switches or disable controls that stop blade rotation. Do not place hands or other objects in the discharge chute or under the deck while the mower is operating. Direct the mower's open discharge chute away from people, animals or fragile property, since injuries from objects launched by mower blades account for many accidents. Never leave a running mower unattended.
- Accidents occur frequently when mowers are operated on inclines covered with wet, slippery grass. Wait until the grass on the incline is dry, then mow across the slope with a walk-behind mower or and up and down the slope with a riding mower.
- Allow the mower to cool before adding gasoline or working on the engine. Remove the spark plug before attempting repairs or blade adjustment. Perform regular maintenance on your mower as outlined in the operator's manual. Periodically check for worn or loose tires, belts, guards, covers, and blades when your mower is not in operation.

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