

Is Your Mowing Equipment Safe?

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Cutting grass is probably the last thing on your mind during the winter months; however, spring will arrive faster than we can dig out our scarves and gloves – bringing with it rapidly growing grass and the full fury of mowing season. Now is the time to start thinking about equipment safety and begin preparing for the rigors that will be placed on your equipment during the spring and summer. Winter is the ideal season to sharpen blades, make needed repairs and perform required maintenance. It's also the perfect time to determine if your mowing equipment is up to par with the current safety standards.

One important safety standard to consider is Rollover Protection Systems or (ROPS) – a frame or roll bar designed to provide a safe compartment for an equipment operator in the event of a rollover accident. ROPS (in combination with a seat belt) can prevent an operator from being pinned under the machine. Without ROPS, the operator remains unprotected from the weight of the mower, which can exceed 1,500 pounds on some commercial models. This could cause serious injury and possibly even death.

Zero-turn mowers are fast and they can turn very quickly, which is why they're popular. It's also why they can be very dangerous in unsafe conditions. Zero turn riding mowers are designed for good traction and stability under normal mowing conditions. However, caution must be used when traveling on steep inclines, uneven terrain, along ditches and especially through wet grass. These conditions, as well as others, provide an opportunity for reduced traction and steering control which can potentially lead to a rollover accident. While ROPS are now standard equipment on most commercial mowers, some earlier models were not equipped with

such protection. This is where manufacturer retrofit programs are important. Leading manufacturers have a program in place where they offer free seat belt and ROPS installation for earlier manufactured models. If your organization owns a zero turn mower or tractor without ROPS, the League's Loss Control Department strongly encourages you to have your equipment retrofitted with the needed overhead protection. Contact your dealer or the manufacturer to determine if your model can be retrofitted with a rollover protection system. Keep in mind that all mowers cannot be retrofitted or it may not be cost effective. If this is the case, replacing the mower with a safer model should certainly be considered. For questions regarding ROPS for any type of mower or tractor, please contact your dealer or the manufacturer.



If your mower is already equipped with the necessary rollover protection or you plan to add it, here are a few tips to keep in mind.:

- **ALWAYS** securely fasten the seat belt during operation of the machine (mower equipped with fixed-position ROPS or with foldable ROPS in “up” position).
- **DO NOT** wear a seat belt when the roll bar is in the “down” position.
- Check the area carefully for proper overhead clearance before mowing.
- Keep the roll bar in the raised and locked position and the seat belt securely fastened during operation. There isn't any protection when the roll bar is in the “down” position.
- Make sure every operator is properly trained and thoroughly familiar with the equipment before operating.

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