

## Use Riding Lawnmowers and Tractors Safely

People working in their yards and gardens is a common sight now that the warm weather has arrived. The Central Connecticut Health District is joining the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPCS) in reminding residents to practice safety and to use common sense while performing their outdoor tasks. Every year, about 230,000 people are treated in emergency rooms for injuries relating to various lawn and garden tools.

One popular piece of equipment in particular, the riding lawnmower, is involved in accidental injuries frequently, along with the garden tractor. Approximately 75 people are killed and about 20,000 are injured annually on or near this equipment. And 1 of every 5 deaths involves a child--most of these fatalities occur when a child is in the path of a moving mower.

Although the role of the CPCS is to ensure the safety of the equipment itself it is important that people using the equipment exercise caution, remain alert, and use the equipment properly.

The CPCS recommends that consumers take the following precautions in order to prevent accidental injuries when caring for their lawns and gardens:

1. Be sure you know how to operate the equipment. Know where the controls are and what they do. Don't remove or disable guards or other safety devices.
2. Dress appropriately for the job. This includes: sturdy shoes with slip-resistant rubber soles, long pants and long-sleeved shirts, close-fitting clothes, eye protection, heavy gloves, hearing protection when needed, and no jewelry, which can get caught in moving parts.
3. Before starting, walk around the area in which you will be working to remove any objects like sticks, glass, metal wire and stones that could cause injury or damage equipment.
4. Never take a child for a ride on a garden tractor or riding mower.
5. Keep children indoors and supervised at all times when any outdoor power equipment is being used. Young children move quickly and are attracted to mowing activity.
6. Never assume children will remain where you last saw them. Be alert and turn off the mower if children enter the mowing area. Use extra care when backing up or going around corners, shrubs, trees or other obstacles.
7. Never work with electric power tools in wet or damp conditions. For protection against electrocution, use a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). GFCI's come in several models, including a portable plug-in type.

8. Be sure that extension cords are in good condition, are rated for outdoor use, and are the proper gauge for the electrical current capacity of the tool.
9. Before making adjustments or clearing jams near moving parts, unplug electric tools and disconnect the spark plug wire on gasoline-powered tools.
10. Be sure that power tools are turned off and made inoperable if they must be left unattended. This will help prevent use by children.
11. Handle gasoline carefully. Remember never to fill gas tanks while machinery is operating or when equipment is still hot. Wipe up spills. Store gas in an approved container away from the house. Finally, never smoke or use any type of flame around gasoline.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury and for more information visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)