Riding mowers are a very common machine used all over campus. Failure to observe safety precautions when operating mowing equipment can result in serious injuries, amputations or even death. The most common types of accidents with riding mowers are rollovers and contact with moving parts.

Operators should receive training from their supervisor on each type of mower they are tasked to operate. Prior to operating the machine for the first time, the operator should review the Operator's Manual to familiarize themselves with the inspection requirements and operating procedures. Then the operator should familiarize themselves with the mower’s controls and safety decals.

**PREPARING FOR SAFE OPERATION**

- Inspect your equipment prior to and periodically throughout mowing operations:
  - Inspect the mower’s tires (damage, pressure), tread, and lug nuts.
  - Test equipment functions (steering, brakes, drive, etc.) to ensure they are working properly.
  - Inspect if the attachments are free from damage before use it.
  - Check the blades for accumulated grass or grease.

- Prepare the mowing area:
  - Walk the area and pick up debris such as rocks, sticks, bottles, cans, wires, etc.
  - While scanning the area for debris, locate other potential hazards such as ditches, drop-offs or embankments.

- Use Personal Protective Equipment:
  - Wear safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants and protective footwear as required by unit. High-visibility vest is required when working on or near roadways.
  - Tie back long hair and not wear loose fitting clothing or jewelry because it could become caught in moving parts.

**PREVENTING ACCIDENTS**

- Prevent rollover accidents:
  - Always keep the Roll-over Protective Structures (ROPS) in the raised and locked position, except when towing on trailer.
  - Do not mow near drop-offs, ditches, embankments or steep slopes.
  - Avoid sudden movements.
    - Abrupt starts, stops and sharp turns can cause the equipment to rollover.
  - Slow down when turning and make wide, gradual turns, especially when mowing on slopes.
  - Mow up and down slopes, not across. Mowing up and down slopes can help prevent a side rollover (Figure 1).
  - Avoid mowing on wet grass.

- Do not get caught in moving parts:
  - Never use a mower without all shields and guards in place.
  - Never put hands or feet near or under moving parts (Figure 2).
  - Shut off the engine before picking up debris or unclogging the chute.
  - Never perform maintenance on running equipment.
  - Keep both hands and feet in the correct position at all the time.
• Preventing accidents involving pedestrians:
  o Never leave a running mower unattended.
    ▪ Stop engine and remove key to prevent accidental start up.
  o Turn off the machine if anyone enters the area (Figure 3).
  o Slow down and be careful when crossing streets or sidewalks.
    ▪ Look behind and to the side before changing directions and always yield the right-of-way.

• Preventing incidents with obstacles:
  o Always keep eyes on path of travel to avoid obstacles (Figure 4).
    ▪ Shrubbery, trees, tall grass or other objects may obstruct your field of view.
  o Avoid mowing in reverse unless absolutely necessary.
  o Allow enough room to safely avoid obstructions. Be careful not to get too close.
  o Slow down and use extra care when approaching corners without visibility.

• Preventing incidents with objects thrown from mowers:
  o Do not point mower discharge in the direction of buildings, people, animals or traffic (Figure 5).
  o Never lift the cutter deck when the blades are in operation.
  o Stop the blades if you are not cutting grass.

• Fuel handling safety: Gasoline and diesel are highly flammable and can ignite and explode easily.
  o Only use OSHA/DOT approved fuel safety cans (Figure 6).
  o Never remove the fuel tank cap or add fuel when the engine is running.
  o Allow engine to cool before adding fuel.
  o Do not smoke near the machine when the engine is running.
  o Never fill the machine in an enclosed space.

• Do not run engine in an enclosed area. Engine exhaust contains carbon monoxide, which is an odorless and deadly poison.