



**Count on it.**

## **Safety Alert for Buyers of Used Commercial Zero Turn Mowers**

*Look Up To Make Sure There's a Rollover Bar Above Your Head*

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (April 17, 2009) — The Toro Company is encouraging buyers of previously owned commercial zero-radius-turn (ZRT) mowers to check that each unit is properly equipped with an overhead rollover protection system (ROPS). Similar to a roll bar on a race car, an overhead ROPS and the use of an accompanying seatbelt can prevent an operator from being thrown from a machine or pinned under the mower should it overturn.

The unlimited maneuverability of ZRTs simplifies trimming neatly around flower beds, mailboxes or other obstacles. They can zip across the yard at a speed of up to 12 mph on straight-aways and are safe when operated properly. However, utilizing any commercial-sized mower, which typically is larger and heavier than consumer models, requires a few precautions to ensure the safety of the operator, including the use of an overhead ROPS. Without ROPS, the operator compartment — and more importantly, the operator — remains unprotected from the weight of the machine, which can surpass 1,700 pounds on some commercial models.

“When a homeowner buys any brand of a used commercial ZRT mower without rollover protection, the first thing they should do is get it scheduled into a dealer to get a ROPS installed,” reveals Sam Steel, a Penn State University safety expert and former National Safety Council official.

Steel says some manufacturers offer a free ROPS and seatbelt installation on older models, and homeowners who purchase used machines should be sure to participate in these retrofit programs.

Daniel Lent, who recently purchased a used commercial zero-radius-turn (ZRT) mower formerly owned by a landscape company is glad he made the move to get a ROPS installed at his Toro dealer, Greenberg Implement in Nowthen, Minn. “In the name of safety — that’s why I did it,” said Lent.

“While commercial landscape maintenance employees are trained to safely handle these quick, powerful machines, homeowners need to be educated on their safe operation, as well,” says Steel, senior research associate, Agricultural Safety and Health, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering at Penn State.

Steel says homeowners need to realize that using the mower two to three hours per week is much different from professionals who are operating them five to seven hours per day.

“For a homeowner, there’s a learning curve each time the unit is used,” Steel explains, pointing out that a ROPS used with a seat belt is an effective measure of protection a homeowner needs on hills or around obstacles.

“Even when you have a ROPS, a seat belt is a must. Pick up debris, hoses or toys before you start the mower, then stay on the unit and buckle up,” says Steel. “And buckle up *every single time*,” he says, “to prevent serious injuries or death in the event of equipment rollovers.”

While ROPS are now standard equipment on all Toro and many other brands of commercial mowers, some older models are resold without the device. That’s where manufacturer retrofit programs come in. For example, through their dealers, both Toro and Exmark offer free ROPS installation on commercial Z mowers missing the manufacturer-installed ROPS.

“Ensuring our customers’ safety is our primary concern,” explains Randy Harris, marketing manager for Toro’s Landscape Contractor Equipment. “All Toro products undergo strict safety, performance and durability testing before they enter the market. When one of our Z Master® mowers is operated according to the safety instructions included in the operating manual and on the machine, it is safe for its intended purpose. If misused, however, and operated in conditions outside the safe operating zone, such as on too-steep slopes or near drop offs, there is an added risk of loss of control and/or rollover, which could result in injury or death.”

Harris says people who purchased an older model Toro® Z Master® 100 or 200 Series commercial mower can get a ROPS installed at their local Toro dealer free of charge.

“When we sell someone a used commercial ZRT, we let them know about the option of a new ROPS free of charge from Toro or Exmark,” explains Jim Greenberg, finance manager at Greenberg Implement. For those who are reluctant to have a ROPS installed because they may perceive it as inconvenient, Greenberg says, “If the homeowner has a lot of hills, I’m adamant about recommending the ROPS.”

And Penn State’s Steel urges homeowners not to sacrifice safety for convenience. “Even an experienced, professional operator of ZRTs should have a ROPS — but a homeowner can get themselves into big trouble without one,” he said.

As a reminder to other ZRT owners, Lent says, “These are big, fast, beefy machines. I feel safer with the ROPS installed.”

### **Safety Basics for Your Z Mower**

Here are a few tips for safe operation of a ZRT mower:

- Get a ROPS installed if you don’t already have one.
- Be careful on hills. Hilly terrain can cause you to lose traction. Don’t tackle slopes greater than 15 degrees and keep movements deliberate and steady.
- Keep your speed in check. You need to feel in control of the machine at all times.
- Stay away from retaining walls, drop-offs and ponds. These are potentially unstable places that should be maintained with a hand trimmer or walk power mower.
- Do not mow slopes when the grass is wet. Slippery conditions reduce traction and could cause sliding and loss of control.
- Never allow children on or around the unit.
- If your model came with a safety video, make sure to watch it, and read and follow the operator’s manual.

Toro ZRT owners can find a local dealer to install the ROPS system at [www.toro.com/dealer](http://www.toro.com/dealer). Exmark owners can visit [www.exmark.com](http://www.exmark.com) .

### **About The Toro Company**

The Toro Company (NYSE: TTC) is a leading worldwide provider of turf and landscape maintenance equipment, and precision irrigation systems. With sales of nearly \$1.9 billion in 2008, Toro’s global presence extends to more than 140 countries through its reputation of world-class service, innovation and turf expertise. Since 1914, the company has built a tradition of excellence around a number of strong brands to help customers care for golf courses, sports fields, public green spaces, commercial and residential properties, and agricultural fields. More information is available at [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com).