

Zero-Turn Riding Mower Safety Tips

Provided by The Toro Company

Zero-turning radius mowers offer efficiency, maneuverability and productivity. In short, they help get the job done in a lot less time. However, these machines, like all lawn mowers, require careful operation to prevent accidents when mowing around water, drop-offs, retaining walls, culverts, steep inclines and in wet environments. Any of these conditions can cause a loss of mower control, increasing the risk of a rollover or other accident.

To promote safe operation, a rollover protection system (ROPS), now comes standard on all new professional zero-turn models. ROPS, in the fully raised position, can prevent an operator from being pinned under their machine. Without ROPS, the operator compartment or safety zone – and more importantly, the operator – remains unprotected from the weight of the machine, which can exceed 1,700 pounds on some models.



In combination with seat belts, ROPS are shown to be highly effective in preventing serious injuries or deaths if the equipment overturns. The ROPS bar must be in the fully raised position - an operator is not protected by a ROPS bar that is folded or partially raised. While this type of protection system is an important safety feature, it is not a substitute for driving safely and consciously choosing to avoid hazards. **Use the following tips to avoid operating in high-risk situations:**

Safety Equipment and Maintenance

Read the information in your operating manual carefully. Make sure safety equipment such as the deflector shield, ROPS and safety interlocks are functional and utilized. ***Never bypass or remove any safety equipment.*** Perform regular equipment inspections and replace all parts including tires, belts, blades and fuel system components with original equipment parts and accessories. Perform maintenance of your mower per the instructions in the operating manual.

Training

To maximize safety, performance and proper operation of the machine, it is essential that all operators carefully read and fully understand the contents of the operating manual. Safe operation of zero-turn mowers is essential. Failure to comply with the operating instructions or receive proper training may result in injury.

Keep Movements Deliberate and Steady

Zero-turn mowers operate differently than traditional riding mowers. They're responsive and can turn on a dime – that's why they are so popular. ***In the interest of safety, keep your speed under control and operate the control levers with smooth, even pressure.***

Maneuvering Hills

Depending on the surroundings, you may feel more comfortable mowing side to side or up and down a hill. In either case, hills can cause a loss of traction. ***Do not mow on slopes greater than 15 degrees.*** Keep movements deliberate and steady. Don't make sudden changes in speed or direction. Avoid mowing slopes under wet conditions. When using a bagging attachment, remember the weight of the grass clippings affects the stability of the mower.

Retaining Walls and Other Drop-offs

When operating a zero-turn riding mower, it's important to review the area to be mowed, and note all hazards before beginning. ***Allow plenty of safe clearance in the vicinity of drop-offs and on unstable ground surrounding ponds, drainage ditches and other bodies of water.*** Without proper clearance, a wheel could slip over an edge, or the ground may give way. A good guide is to allow a safe area of two mower widths. Hand trim this area with a walk-behind mower and/or string trimmer. It is tempting to get close to the edges to eliminate a little hand work, but don't sacrifice safety in the interest of saving a little time or effort.

Loading and Unloading

The ramp you use to load and unload your mower is also a slope. Use a full-width ramp that is long enough so that the ground-to-ramp angle does not exceed 15 degrees. Utilize your ROPS and seat belt whenever possible. When on the ramp, avoid sudden changes in speed, and do not attempt to turn.

ROPS and Safety

Keep the roll bar in the fully raised and locked position, and use your seat belt when operating the mower. An operator is not protected by a ROPS bar that is not fully raised. Commercial operators whose mowers are not equipped with ROPS should ask their local equipment dealer to install one. Toro dealers will install a two-post ROPS for free on any Toro Z Master model manufactured in 2004 and prior. Installation can be arranged by calling 888-865-5675 (in U.S. and Canada). For additional zero-turn safety information or to view the complete line of Toro lawn maintenance products, please visit www.toro.com.

