

Iowa LTAP Mission

To foster a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation system by improving skills and knowledge of local transportation providers through training, technical assistance, and technology transfer, thus improving the quality of life for Iowans.

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Shop focus: Mowing operations

Timely mowing is an important aspect of any vegetation management program to help control tree and brush growth and to reduce invasive species and snow drifting. It may also help reduce animal-related collisions.

That said, safety education for mower operators is an important and rewarding responsibility for local agencies. Following are some tips to help you increase mowing operations safety and efficiency.

Alert road users to mower operations

Key to operator safety is public awareness of mower operations. A “Mowing Ahead” (or similar warning) sign used in advance of the work zone on the right-of-way will help alert drivers about mowing operations.

Inspect work area and identify risks

Before operating equipment, workers should examine the work area and identify and remove potential projectile objects that could endanger passers-by and operators or damage mowers. Obstacles such as tree stumps or culvert ends should be marked with flags that can be easily identified by the mower operator.

More than half of mower-related accidents result from rolling the machine because

an operator attempted an unnecessary risk of mowing on uneven ground or a dangerously steep slope. To prevent such risks, always follow manufacturers’ recommendations for working on slopes. Risk is also minimized when mowers are equipped with a rollover protective structure and a seat belt.

Evaluate equipment regularly

All equipment should be evaluated at the start of each work day to ensure proper working conditions. Regular inspections and maintenance are critical to public and operator safety as well as equipment operation and service life.

Personal protective gear should also be inspected regularly and repaired or replaced as necessary. Protective gear such as hard hats, ear protection, heavy gloves, and boots should always be worn properly to minimize operations-related risks.

Supervisors should be notified when potential work-zone hazards or unsafe operating practices are identified.

Role of support vehicles, when needed

Support vehicles play an important role in improving work-zone safety for mower operators by alerting the public to vegetation management activities, cleaning up debris, and pruning and weed whacking areas difficult and unsafe for mower operators to reach. ■



Operator safety is an important aspect of vegetation management for local agencies (photo courtesy of Ryan Weidemann, Webster County Engineer's Office).

