

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
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The steady drone of lawnmowers is a sure sign that spring is here and the grass is growing rapidly. It takes frequent mowing to keep grass at the desired height. As a result of the need for frequent mowing, it can be easy to shortcut some of the practices needed to safely mow. The following safety tips will reduce the likelihood of injury when performing one of the most common summertime chores.

First, before starting the mower, check your lawn for items such as sticks, rocks, wires, toys, etc. Also look for immovable objects such as pipes or partially buried rocks and avoid them. Second, use care when filling the tank with gasoline. Clean up any spills and never fill the tank if the engine is hot. Third, wear close-fitting clothes that are less likely to get caught on controls or moving parts. Long pants and sturdy leather shoes offer protection from flying sticks, stones or other items not caught by the guard. You may want to consider wearing hearing protection, particularly if you will be mowing for long periods of time. Fourth, practice safe mowing techniques such as:

- never start the mower in an enclosed area in order to prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide
- make sure children and others are out of the area being mowed
- never point the discharge chute at anyone; you never know when something may be thrown by the mower
- do not mow wet grass; you may lose your footing and/or the chute may plug
- use care on inclines; some slopes are too steep to mow safely; use good judgment; always push walk behind mowers across slopes and drive riding mowers up and down slopes
- never leave a running mower unattended; newer mowers have operator presence switches that automatically stop the engine when the operator releases the handle.

Fifth, disconnect the spark plug to service the mower. This will prevent the mower from accidental startups. Never remove safety features or shields from the mower. Remember, they are there for your protection.

Often times, lawn mowing duties are one of the first duties given to younger family members. Due to their inexperience, it is important that parents properly instruct and model safe mowing practices for younger family members. Be sure your child can safely operate the mower before assigning them this task. The "Knowing Mowing Program" developed by the American Red Cross and Briggs and Stratton Company, recommend children be at least twelve years old before mowing.

Prevention of accidents begins before the lawn mower is started. When mowing, stay focused; most accidents occur when the operator becomes distracted. By following some basic lawn mower safety practices, everyone can enjoy an accident free summer and the beauty of a well cared for lawn! If you would like additional information about lawn mower safety, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.