



MOWING SAFETY

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Mowing is a major activity for highway maintenance organizations from spring through fall. Highway mowing is important to motorist safety, as mowing prevents tall grass and weeds from obscuring the visibility of motorists. There are several key areas highway agencies should focus their training on to ensure their workers are safe in mowing.

Operator training is important. Operators should understand the operation of their tractor and any special safety equipment it has. One accessory that is commonly added to tractors for mowing is a device to provide the operator with an indication the steepness of the slope they are operating on. These devices are inexpensive and can help operators gauge the conditions they are work-

ing in. Another key point in operator training is teaching operators to use their seatbelt and if they get into a situation where the tractor rolls, rely on the seatbelt and the roll over protection system (ROPS) to protect them. Although a tractor roll may seem like a slow event, it isn't and jumping clear is not a safe or practical option. Using a seatbelt and relying on the ROPS is the best option.

Operators should also be aware of all the safety features on the mower. When they are inspecting blades on batwing mowers, the deck should be pinned or fixed in some manner, not relying solely on the hydraulics to hold the deck up. The pre-mowing inspection should include the blades, driveline, PTO cover and all safety features of the mower.

Cabbed tractors also provide a higher level of protection for operators. Cabs protect the operators from rocks and other objects that may be thrown or kicked up by passing vehicles. They also provide protection from objects thrown from the mower. The blades on highway mowing equipment can have tip speeds of 160 to 200 mph. Although there are safety chains, objects can and do exit the mower at high speed. Operators should try to be aware of people present in areas where mowers could throw debris. In addition to thrown objects, cabs can reduce operator exposure to pollen, dust and hazards related to any chemical present that the mower may encounter.