

**WALK-BEHIND MOWERS**

Mowing activities involve hand-arm vibration and forceful exertion.



## POTENTIAL HAZARDS

◼ Slips/trips/falls ◼ Noise ◼ Vibration ◼ Sprains/strains

◼ Ejected material ◼ Burns ◼ Push/pull force ◼ Awkward posture

◼ Duration of task ◼ Rapidly rotating cutting blades ◼ Inhalation of dust/allergens/fumes

#### PRE-OPERATIONAL SAFETY CHECKS

1. Wear PPE before starting equipment (e.g. non-slip steel cap work boots, gloves, hearing protection, safety glasses, dust mask, sun protection). Wear a safety vest when working near public roadways/car parks. Wear sun protective clothing that is absorbent and allows air flow.
2. Inspect area to be mowed for debris such as sticks, wire, sprinkler heads, rocks, construction materials etc. Remove all debris prior to starting mower. Prune/remove overhanging branches to avoid eye injuries and the need to stoop or twist when pushing the mower.
3. Reduce the effort required to operate the mower:

 ◼ Check that the mower is in good operating order: make sure blades are sharp, the motor is running smoothly, the auto-switch mechanism is working correctly, wheels move freely and that safety guards are in place.

 ◼ Use fresh fuel and check the air filter and spark plug are clean. This will reduce the amount of pulling it takes to start the lawnmower.

 ◼ Identify inclines and plan to push the mower across inclines rather than up and down.

 ◼ Rectify uneven surfaces and holes; take extra care with footing to avoid slip/trips/falls.

1. Adjust the height of the mower’s handles to a comfortable level.
2. Familiarise yourself with the layout of the mower controls. The location, design, direction of movement and operation of various controls will affect the level of physical stress your body receives and the energy required to operate the mower.

**OPERATIONAL SAFETY CHECKS**

1. Ensure no other persons are in the vicinity of the mowing area during work. Be aware of the potential for ejected material to cause harm to self, others, animals, buildings and plant. Never leave machine unattended while engine is running.
2. Minimise the effects of hand-arm vibration by:

 ◼ resting and flexing fingers regularly to maintain grip strength

 ◼ rotating tasks to minimise prolonged exposure without breaks

 ◼ using thick gloves to pad your hands to reduce vibration

1. Manage fatigue and heat stress by taking periodic breaks for large, long or physically demanding tasks to prevent fatigue and/or if it is hot. Remain hydrated.
2. Keep the body in a neutral upright position close to the mower to prevent excessive bending, leaning, over stretching, awkward positions, strain on wrists, lower back and legs.
3. Avoid walking backwards when the mower is in operation.

#### HOUSEKEEPING

#### ◼ Before making any adjustments, bring the mower to a complete standstill and isolate the spark plug.

#### ◼ Clean away any foreign material and debris from in and around engine and catcher parts.

◼ Maintain and service the mower as per the manufacturer instructions to ensure safe and easy operation.

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| **Date of last review** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | **Signature** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

See also: Equipment and Machinery [Walk-Behind Mower SOP](https://mpe.education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/sop-walk-behind-mower.DOCX)