



SAFETY CHECKUP



Equipment Ownership 101—Safety First

(NAPSA)—Equipment safety is no accident. Just because you can drive a car doesn't mean you'll automatically be good at operating tractors and utility vehicles. Keeping safety top of mind, John Deere offers practical tips to avoid injury when operating outdoor equipment.

Compact Tractor Safety Tips

A tractor is a lot like a computer. It's the add-ons that do the work. For computers, that means software. For tractors, that means attachments, such as rotary cutters and mowers, loaders and box blades.

But with attachments come additional safety considerations. Because the attachments—whether on the front or back of the tractor—change the distribution of weight, it is important to keep ballast in mind.

Think of it this way. Dinosaurs with long necks, such as the brontosaurus, also had long tails. Without their tails to balance them, the brontosaurus would have likely tipped face forward into the dirt.

Similarly, a tractor with a loader on the front needs added ballast in back. Manufacturers offer plenty of ballast options, from front weights to wheel weights to ballast boxes.

New tractor owners should also keep in mind that a feature called a power take off—or PTO—lets the tractor send power to attachments such as rotary cutters and mowers. John Deere recommends that purchasers of compact tractors remember to:

- Read and understand the operator's manual.



Though fun to operate, utility vehicles are not toys. Be respectful of the machine and its capabilities.

- Pay attention to warning labels on tractors and their attachments.
- Wear proper clothing, avoiding open-toed shoes and loose clothing.
- Keep all protective shields in place on attachments.
- Never let children ride on a tractor or attachment.

Utility Vehicle Safety Tips

The most frequent cause of accidents involving utility vehicles is speed, says Dave Stricker, manager of product engineering services for the Horicon, Wisconsin-based factory of John Deere Worldwide Commercial and Consumer Equipment.

"We've had situations where people go too fast for the conditions or the terrain, which can result in the driver possibly losing control," Stricker says. "That can cause the vehicle to go into the ditch or the driver and passenger to be ejected."

Stricker adds that operators can get themselves into trouble

even at low speeds. He suggests that utility vehicle purchasers make sure to:

- Allow the dealer to explain safe vehicle operation.
- Read the operator's manual.
- Make sure speed is appropriate for terrain and weather conditions.
- Be aware of the dangers of tipping, particularly when driving across slopes.
- Only carry one passenger in the approved seat provided.

Lawn Tractor Safety Tips

Fires are the most frequent kind of incident involving lawn tractors and therefore should be a top concern.

"Leaves and grass can accumulate on the mower and around the muffler and engine and can catch on fire from the heat," Stricker says. "In some cases, the fires may destroy the tractor and the place it is stored."

The most tragic personal injuries involving lawn tractors happen when operators drive or back over children they didn't know were there, Stricker says.

Stricker suggests that riding lawn tractor purchasers remember to:

- Always keep children inside the house while mowing.
- Never give rides to children.
- Avoid mowing in reverse.
- Mow up and down a slope, rather than across it, to reduce rollover risk.
- Avoid mowing on slopes that the tractor cannot back up.

Remember, don't take safety for granted.



Note to Editor: This is the sixth installment in an ongoing series that provides helpful tips and advice to rural homeowners who are first-time equipment buyers.