



the Learning experience

Put safety first: productivity will then follow

Health and safety legislation is very much a part of our everyday lives. Mutterings of "mollycoddling" and "wasn't like this in my day" should not deflect attention from the fact that the various laws introduced over the past 20 years have made work practices a great deal safer for all involved. And also for those who come into contact with them.

Most of the complaints of those who feel that there is too much legislation revolve around the belief that people should have sufficient common sense to avoid dangerous situations. The problem is that one can never plan for the unexpected or unpredictable.

Considered on its own, a golf course is not an unsafe place. However, put a few golfers on it, scatter some machines around and introduce a wide range of weather and turf conditions and one has raised the risk factors considerably.

We all appreciate that a driven golf ball can cause serious injury, taking extra care when crossing a known flight path. Yet how many of us have had a ball whizz past our ears from a completely unexpected direction followed by an embarrassed cry of "sorry" from the undergrowth.

One may think that there is little that could have been done to avoid such a situation. However, being aware of the dangers



All manufacturers and their supplying dealers should provide comprehensive instruction to users in the safe and proper operation and care of their machines

means that we are in a position to take additional care wherever there may be potential hazards.

Look out for groups of golfers and observe where they are standing. If one of the party has driven into the rough or trees, the others will be watching for the flight of the ball, providing an early and clear warning to green-staff that a shot is being played from a hidden position.

Machinery can also behave

unpredictably, yet not through any direct fault of the machine or conscious irresponsibility by its operator.

A tractor and mower may have been driven a thousand times across a banked green surround without any problem or thought of danger. Yet remove the mower or introduce a patch of moisture and a safe situation can become a slippery slope to a serious accident.

The same applies to the use of pedestrian rotary mowers, and particularly hover-type machines used on banks around bunkers, tees and plateau greens.

If there is no safer alternative to this method of cutting, then ensure that the manufacturer's instructions are followed closely regarding the machine's safe and proper use.

Ideally, the mower should be fitted with plastic or free-swinging blades rather than the rigid metal type and the operator should be equipped with suitable protective clothing such as eye protectors and steel toe-capped boots.

On steep slopes, many users prefer to tie a length of rope to the handle of a hover mower, pulling it across the grass while

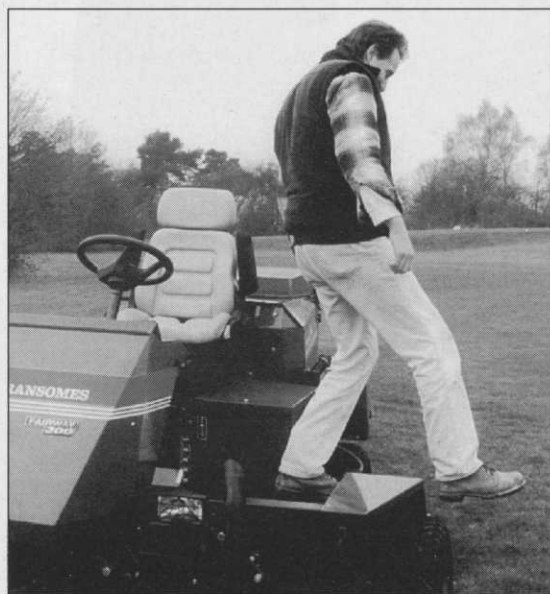
they stand on firm, level ground. While this might be preferable to operating the machine at an acute angle while physically holding the handles, it still has to be regarded as inherently unsafe because one is not in full control of the mower. If the practice has to be followed, it is vital to ensure that no one will be affected if the mower should tip over or run away.

As a last resort, always release the rope if you slip. It is far better that the mower is damaged rather than have an operator sliding out-of-control beneath the hood of the machine.

The advice in all cases is to treat all machinery with respect. There is no substitute for experience, but no one in their right mind would want to have an accident in order to learn the safest way to carry out a particular task or operation.

Health and safety legislation demands that proper training must be given to everyone who operates machinery. Indeed, accident statistics show that the majority of accidents occur when employees use machines without proper training or supervision.

All manufacturers should provide sound instruction in the safe



Many ride-on mowers are now fitted with safety switches which shut down the engine if the operator leaves the seat with the cutting units or transmission engaged



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and correct operation of a piece of machinery. This may be carried out on a factory training course, at a dealer's premises or out on the turf where the equipment is to be used.

But it's not just those who use the machines who need training. Regular and proper maintenance by a competent mechanic not only keeps the machine working at peak efficiency, it also helps prevent a drop in safety levels.

Very few mowers built 10 years ago had safety switches to shut down the engine should the operator leave the seat with the cutting units or transmission engaged. It is therefore important that hydraulic valves and their actuating linkages receive regular maintenance to ensure that they do what they are supposed to, particularly those controlling power to moving parts.

It is not unknown for a valve to stick, releasing itself without warning while adjustments are

being made to the cutting units. For safety's sake and whenever practicable, always switch off the engine when servicing or adjusting any moving component. This advice applies to all powered machines.

If one needs to be close to moving parts in work, always wear proper safety protective clothing and ensure that all appropriate safety requirements are observed. There are also additional, specific rules for those using grinding wheels.

Although most modern hydraulic ride-on mowers incorporate seat safety switches, it is important that these are kept in good condition and are properly adjusted. They have been incorporated within the machine for a specific purpose and should be checked for proper function as part of the regular service and maintenance routine.

A similar proviso applies to power take-off guards, a vital, but



Power take-off guards should be in place, in good condition and regularly maintained. Ensure that their restraining chains are securely fastened in work

often neglected safety component. Apart from checking on condition and fit, it is important that the guard is greased regularly to ensure that the drive shaft within can rotate smoothly and that the restraining chains at either end are in place and securely attached to non-moving parts of the power unit and the machine. This will prevent the guard from rotating with the shaft, minimising the risk of clothing or any other loose material being caught by the guard.

Turf machinery manufacturers go to great lengths to ensure that

their machines are safe for the purposes for which they are intended.

Never by-pass or 'short circuit' a safety measure in an attempt to speed up a job or "make life easier". Always look for the safest method of carrying out a task, keep the operator's manual at hand and, if in any doubt, call the supplying dealer or the manufacturer for advice.

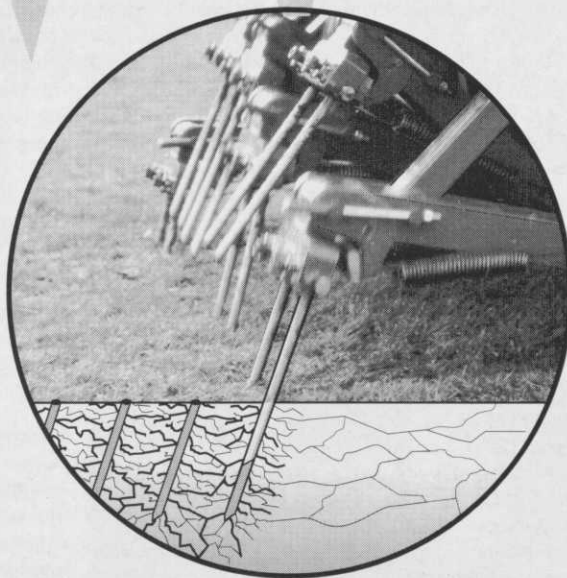
It is in their interest that end users get the maximum out of their machines - but that must never be at the expense of safety.

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