SAFE MOWER OPERATION MAY REDUCE INJURIES

The greatest danger while mowing a lawn is from accidental contact with the rotating blade.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 64 per-cent of all walk-behind mower injuries are caused by contacting the blade. This can occur when the operator is clearing the discharge chute of grass clippings while the blade is rotating.

Other blade-contact accidents occur when the operator adjusts the cutting height of the mower with the engine running and when the operator's foot slips under the mower housing.

Three per cent of all blade injuries result in amputations of the toes or fingers.

Fifteen per cent of blade-contact injuries produce fractures or dislocations. Seventy per cent result in lacerations.

CPSC estimates that there are more than 120,000 power lawn mower accidents each year. In 1979, reports submitted to CPSC by hospitals across the nation indicate that over 65,000 persons were treated in hospital emergency rooms for rotary lawn mower injuries.

CPSC ofers these safety tips to reduce chances of a mower injury:

■ Before mowing: Pick up all debris (stones, wire, toys, etc.) on the lawn. Check for objects near shrubs, trees and fences. Adjust the cutting height of the mower at this time.

If the lawn is wet, wait until it dries. Make sure you know where the obstacles exist (pipes, etc.) on the lawn. Fill the gas tank before starting the mower.

■ While mowing: Never point the discharge chute at anyone. Shut engine off when going over gravel, rocks or immoveable objects. Mow forward as much as possible so you know where you're going. With a walk-behind mower, mow across the slope. With a riding mower, mow up and down the slope. Keep extension cords of electric mowers far away from the cutting path. Turn off engine if you leave the machine— even for a moment.

■ Periodic checking: Disconnect the ignition wire from the spark plug if you are doing maintenance on the mower. Keep the mower lubricated, the oil level checked, and the discharge chute cleaned after using the mower. Store gasoline in container made for gasoline storage and away from any ignition sources... Remember, gasoline is an explosive and treat it accordingly.

