

# VLR SAFETY TAILGATE TALK

September 2016

*Subject: Mowing Safety*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location (garage, mm, etc...):

Instructions:

Safety Coordinators & Supervisors should use this Tailgate Talk as a guide for discussion during their safety meetings. The primary purpose of the safety meetings is to give crews the opportunity to discuss any safety related concerns they may have.

Once the meeting has concluded, the Presenter should have each employee sign this form and include their Employee ID# in the spaces below.

TGT Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Employee
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	
14.	
15.	
16.	

**Mowing can sometimes be one big obstacle course.** You need to be alert for ground objects and hidden culverts that might cause the tractor to overturn.

**If possible, check the area beforehand to locate natural obstacles** like hidden rocks, tree stumps, low branches, and over grown gullies. Take note of sign, posts, fences, and utilities. Remember, even at low speeds, running over a hidden object can raise one side of the tractor and make for a rough ride. Be especially careful when mowing around signs. If you accidentally mow one down, report it to your supervisor as soon as possible.

**Driving too close to the edge of a ditch or bank is another major cause of mower accidents.** In the event that you do become stuck in a ditch or muddy area, do not rev up the engine and pop the clutch. You can cause the front end of the tractor to buck and rotate around the rear axle, possibly causing serious injury. First, try backing out. Put a board behind the rear wheels to help provide traction. If this does not work, dig out an area in front of the rear wheels, shift into low gear and let the clutch out slowly. It may also help to dig out the area in front of the front tires; if they are not already on solid ground. If this does not work, attach a tow line to the drawbar of the stuck tractor and pull it out with another tractor.

**When starting up a hill, let out the clutch gently.** Popping the clutch can cause the mower to tip backwards. You might even want to back up the hill, but if it is at all possible, climb the hill at an angle.

**If the slope is steep, use a low gear to keep the engine from stalling.** If it stalls, set the brake immediately and apply power gradually after starting up.

**The tractor chassis is built high off the ground so it can clear low obstacles.** This means it has a high center of gravity and is somewhat top-heavy for use on slopes. You know the feeling when driving sideways down a slope—it has a tendency to overturn. If the tractor does start to tip, steer the front wheels downhill, not uphill. Turning downhill will quickly increase the tractor's stability and help to prevent overturn.

*Continued.*

**Keep the tractor in gear while going downhill and let the engine act as a brake to slow things down.** If the tractor brakes too much, open the throttle slightly. If the engine doesn't supply enough braking power, press both brake pedals.

**Many injuries have happened as a result of climbing on and off the tractor** as well as falling off while it is in operation. If there is a step or platform, take time to clean off mud, grease, and other debris that may build up during operation. Don't jump from the tractor. There is always the danger of catching your clothing on pedals, levers, or anything else that might stick out. You could land on uneven surface and injure your ankles, legs, or even worse—your back.

**Use handrails, handhold, and steps to pull yourself up onto the tractor.** Try to keep three points of contact on the machine at all times; two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand.

**Do all of your driving while sitting in the seat and fasten the seat belt.** Never operate a tractor while riding on the drawbar, sitting on the fender, standing on the steps, or sitting on the backrest of the operator's seat. Keep your speed under control and never drive so fast that the front wheels of the tractor bounce up and down. Make sure to keep hands, feet clear of cutting blades while they are in motion. If cutting blades get tangled in wire, or other objects, this will cause the machine to get off balance. The cutting height should be set at 8 to 12 inches to prevent scalping, falling into depressions on bad terrain or hitting rocks which could be thrown into passing vehicles.