
U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION



Office of Compliance Requirements¹ for Walk-Behind

Power Lawn Mowers, 16 C.F.R. Part 1205

What is the purpose of the lawn mower Safety Standard?

This standard reduces cuts and amputations caused by contact with the blades of walk-behind power lawn mowers. It requires generally that, for power lawn mowers with rotary blades:

- (1) The mower's blade must stop turning within 3 seconds after the operator lets go of the mower's controls.
- (2) The design of the rear mower deck and of the area around the discharge chute must keep the operator's foot from coming in contact with the rotating blade while his or her hands are on the mower's controls.

Reel-type mowers do not need to meet the performance standards. However, both rotary mowers and reel-type mowers must have a label that warns about the danger of cuts and amputation from contact with the blade.

Where can I find the safety standard for walk-behind power lawn mowers?

The standard is published in the Code of Federal Regulations in Title 16, Part 1205.

What is a walk-behind power lawn mower?

A walk-behind power mower is a machine that uses an engine or motor to power a blade with a minimum cutting width of 12 inches to cut grass and that a person normally operates walking behind the mower. A rotary mower has one or more blades underneath the deck of the mower that turn in a direction parallel to the deck. A reel-type mower has one or more helical blades that cut grass by scissoring it against another bar or blade.

Mowers are not covered by the standard if:

- (1) The cutting width is 30 inches or greater.

- (2) The mower weighs 200 lbs. or more, and
- (3) For mowers with engines, the engine has 8 or more horsepower.

What are the requirements for the blade control system?

A rotary power mower must have a system that controls the blade which:

- (1) keeps the blade from turning unless the operator starts the control;
- (2) allows the blade to turn only while the operator is holding or in contact with the control;
- (3) makes the blade, when it is running at top speed, come to a complete stop within 3 seconds after the operator lets go of the control;
- (4) for an engine-powered mower that only has manual starting controls, stops the blade from turning without stopping the engine. If the starting controls are located within 24 inches of the top part of the mower's handles that the operator holds onto, the blade control may stop both the engine and the blade. The blade control may also stop both the engine and the blade if the mower has a shield to protect the user's feet that goes all the way around the deck of the mower.

In addition to the blade control discussed above, rotary mowers must have another manual control for the mower user to operate before he or she can restart a stopped blade. This control may be separate from the blade control, or may be part of the blade control as long as such a dual control takes two separate actions to restart the blade.

Where must the starting controls on a power mower be located?

A rotary mower with a blade that starts turning immediately when the engine or motor starts must have the control that starts the mower located in the

¹ This document is a simple summary of the walk-behind power lawn mower requirements and does not replace the requirements published in 16 C.F.R. Part 1205. The summary does not include all of the details included in those requirements. For those details, please refer to the regulation or contact the Office of Compliance.

area where a user operates the mower. This area is 15 inches in front of and behind the part of the handle that the operator holds onto, and 4 inches on either side of the handle. Please refer to the standard for more detail and for an exception to this requirement.

What does the rule say about blade contact under the rear mower deck or discharge chute area?

The standard requires rotary power mowers to have protective shields. These shields prevent the operator’s foot from contacting the blade, either under the mower’s deck or in the discharge chute area, when the operator has his or her hands on the mower’s controls. Generally, a shield must prevent a foot probe (Figure 1) from entering the path of the mower blade or from forcing any part of the mower into the path of the blade. The rule contains procedures for testing rigid and movable shields with the foot probe and for testing shields when a mower hits a raised object. It also contains tests to make sure that the shields are strong enough to withstand damage during mower use. Because of the detail involved in performing these tests, we have not attempted to summarize them. For more detail, please refer to 16 C.F.R. 1205.4 or contact the Office of Compliance.

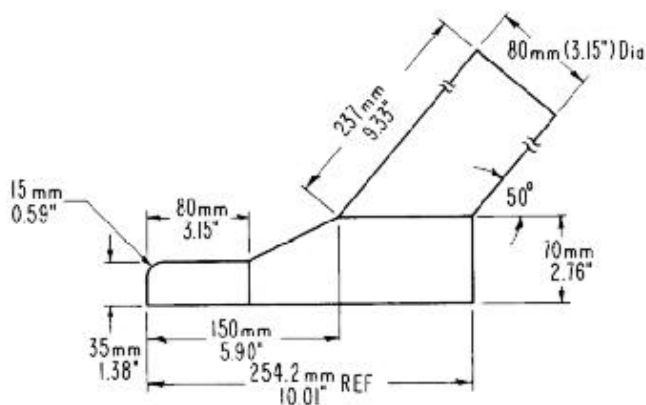


Figure 1 Foot Probe

What are the requirements for labels on rotary and reel-type walk behind power mowers?

Each rotary and reel-type mower must have a label (Figure 2) at least 3.25 inches high and 4 inches wide. The lettering and symbol on the label must have the same size and relation to each other and to the label in Figure 2. You must place the warning label on the

blade housing of a rotary mower as close as possible to the discharge opening. If the mower does not have a discharge opening, place the label where it will be easily seen while the operator is cutting grass. The label on a reel-type mower must be on the mower deck as close as possible to the center of the cutting width.



Figure 2 Warning Label

In addition to the warning label, a mower must have a certification label that identifies the production lot of the mower, the year and month it was manufactured, the place where it was assembled, the name of the person or firm issuing the certification, and the statement “Meets CPSC blade safety requirements.”

Are there certification and recordkeeping requirements for walk-behind power mowers?

Yes. Every manufacturer or importer of rotary walk-behind power mowers must certify that, based on a test of each product or on a reasonable testing program, their products meet the standard. These manufacturers or importers must also keep written records for at least 3 years identifying the mowers and production lots tested, the tests performed, and the results of those tests. Manufacturers and importers of reel-type mowers do not need to certify their mowers.

Where can I find additional Information?

You can obtain more information on the requirements for walk-behind power lawn mowers from the Commission’s Web Site at, <http://www.cpsc.gov> or from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Office of Compliance, Washington, D.C. 20207, telephone: (301) 504-0608 or e-mail: sect15@cpsc.gov.