

Roadside Mowing



Roadside mowing is necessary to keep the clear zone visible for drivers. However, roadside mowing puts crews in danger of moving traffic. This article will explore ways to improve the safety of crews performing roadside maintenance.

Consider the Clear Zone

Before starting, it is good public relations practice to leave a tidy workplace behind.

Control vegetation limiting sight distance to critical signs and at intersecting roadways. Trim branches, with the cooperation of landowners.

Mowing is vital, tall grass prevents drivers from gauging the potential for conflict at driveways and intersections and limits their estimation of curve severity. Here are some mowing tips:

- Mow consistently.
- Time roadside mowing to growth cycles and weather. In hot and dry weather, grass grows more slowly. Cutting it too short and/or too often exposes roots and soil to direct sun, causing them to dry out. Don't mow in wet conditions.
- On slopes that rise or fall one foot or less, in 2.5 feet of horizontal distance, consider mowing 15 feet beyond the pavement edge.
- Mow, to blend the maintained roadside with natural or planted vegetation.
- On slopes, use a side-mounted unit. Mow one swath beyond the point where the slope becomes steeper than one foot in two and a half

feet. Mow two, four, five, or eight feet behind guardrail. These distances are based on how far the guard rail types deflect when hit by a car.

Mowing Safely

On slopes that rise or fall away less than one foot in two and a half feet of horizontal distance, use a side-mounted mower or a boom, keep the tractor unit. Operate side-mounted or boom mower units on the uphill side of the tractor, to reduce the possibility of overturning the tractor.

Before starting the mower, check the chain guard and mower. These prevent debris from being thrown. Immediately replace broken or missing debris guards. Cover all v-belts, drive chains, and power take-off shafts.

Raise mowers when crossing driveways and roadways.

Block the mower wheels before changing or sharpening a blade. Check blades for cracks or damage.

When mowing, face on-coming traffic whenever possible to watch for out-of-control vehicles.

Wear a hard hat and safety goggles to provide protection against branches and flying debris. Wear leather gloves and boots with steel toes and hard soles.

Traffic Control

Mowing is a moving operation that occurs on roadside. It does not always move steadily in one direction, sometimes the mower must double back to mow wide areas. Mowing requires different traffic control than other maintenance operations.

The most important traffic control (and safety) tool is to make the mower highly visible. Place a *Slow Moving Vehicle* sign (reflective triangle) on the rear of the tractor. Use rotating yellow beacons on tractors and yellow flashers on the roll bar or top of the tractor cab. Operate these at all times. Install an orange pennant on a whip to show the location of

continued on page 11

Milestones:

Richard Cousins, Rochester, was deployed to Iraq.

Perry Day, Amherst, was promoted to Building, Grounds and Solid Waste Foreman.

Kathy DesRoches, UNH T² Center, married Stuart Thompson.

Arthur Fernald, Road Agent, Jackson, passed away.

Donald Hardy, is the new road agent in Lempster.

Art Leblanc has retired from the town of Hollis.

Jeff Babel is the new Public Works Director.

Butch Leel, NHDOT, is retiring in July 2007.

Websites:

Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads <http://www.dirtandgravelroads.org/>

Center for Rural Safety www.ruralsafety.umn.edu

LTAP Search Engine www.mnltap.umn.edu/search/

from page 4

the tractor over the edge of slopes. Use the tractor's headlights at all times.

Use a flashing arrow panel on the back unless operated in the caution mode. When working in a median area, do not use an arrow as this may suggest to motorists that they are being signaled to pass the tractor. This is a dangerous maneuver that could result in a conflict with on-coming traffic.

On roadways, establish work zone traffic control according to the MUTCD. For operations that do not use the travel lane, use the WORK AREAS NEXT ___ MILES (G20-1-1) sign. As work progresses, move the sign so there are no more than 3 miles between the sign and the location of the work.

Remove signs when work is not in progress, but do not remove the sign if the mower is stopped for repairs or adjustments.

Source:

PennDOT Publication 203, Work Zone Traffic Control.

Vegetation Control for Safety, a Guide for Street and Highway Maintenance Personnel, FHWA-RT-90-003, Iowa Technology Transfer Center.

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