



Municipal Mowing – Safe Distance to Bystanders



Recommended safe distance to bystanders or other personnel whilst mowing is 30m (100').

Note: Should anyone come within 30m (100') the simplest method to quickly reduce any risk of injury is to stop the tractor (cease movement), this eliminates both the possibility of picking up and throwing debris and / or driving into someone.

Notes:

The term **mowing** in this safe distance to bystanders recommendation, applies to general grass control in areas typically including; playing fields and ovals, suburban parks and golf fairways.

Mowing metropolitan road sides must be considered separately. Whilst many are well maintained, debris from passing vehicles presents varying levels of danger. Vehicles are expected to pass the mower within a few meters and generally offer protection to the occupants by reason of an enclosed space; however this protection is not applicable to pedestrians and / or bike riders.

Mowing maintenance of vacant blocks is specifically excluded, unless they can be qualified as typical suburban park by means of being well maintained. (Mown typically at least 1-2 times per month.)

Vacant blocks present a very specific set of hazards that have already lead to one death during maintenance.

- They are often not well maintained (mown at irregular and long intervals) with significant volumes of vegetation, which can hide a large assortment of debris.
- They are generally poorly monitored and are often a dumping ground for rubbish.
- Being housing blocks within suburban areas they are subject to a significant amount of passing pedestrian traffic plus neighbours.

Machine guarding against ejected debris cannot 100% prevent debris being thrown. No matter what is done with guarding of the machine, any hollows, ditches and slopes in the ground profile potentially allow debris to be ejected and travel some distance. Maximising the distance to bystanders and minimizing their presence is the optimum approach to safety. Timing is all important, mow areas close to walkways and known pedestrian routes while bystanders and those passing are minimal / non existent.

For **slashing, scrub control or working any area not mown regularly,** the recommended safe distance to bystanders **MUST BE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED,** especially where debris such as rocks, branches or dumped rubbish exist or cannot be seen and / or removed. Slashing operations are not prohibited; however additional risk control measures must be undertaken. For example; all bystanders must be kept well away (250m) by suitable traffic control or lockout zones.

Machine requirements for municipal mowing:

- Rotary slashers that are fully debris guarded as detailed in the industry safety code. (Refer: Slashers. A guide on health and safety standards. WorkCover NSW Catalogue No. WC02797. ISBN 978 1 74218 629 0).
- Howard Roller-mowers. These units are equipped rollers and suitable debris guards to reduce the chance of debris being thrown.

Specific operating requirements for municipal mowing:

- Operators must view the area to be worked prior to starting and either remove any debris that could be picked up and thrown or plan to work around areas that may contain such debris.
- Whilst mowing, any debris sighted, requires that the operator cease mowing that area until it is cleared of the debris.