

A 34 year old male employee was operating a stand-behind mower on an incline behind a local strip mall when it rolled over on top of him.

Work at the site had begun for the purpose of mowing, weed eating, and leaf blowing the landscaped areas of the strip mall. The work at this location is performed on a weekly basis by a three-man team consisting of the crew leader, the victim, and another employee. It was decided beforehand that the crew leader would operate the company's two mowers while the other two would weed eat and use blowers. The subject mower was used on the grass in the front of the building, and then was parked by the truck and trailer at the northeast corner of the parking lot near the dumpster. The crew leader then mowed the side and the rear of the lot with the walk behind mower which is what is used for steeper slopes. After the crew leader finished mowing, he stated that he got a leaf blower off the trailer and began to help finish up work at the site.

Unbeknownst to the crew leader and the other employee, the victim boarded the subject mower and traveled to a sloped area that was already mowed behind the building. As he was traveling up the slope, the nose of the cutter deck lifted off the ground while the rear wheels maintained contact. The front of the machine became more airborne and began to rotate backwards toward the employee. During this rotation, the employee stepped off of the machine's rear platform and attempted to stop the rotation by pushing it down with his upper body. As the employee was doing this, both of his feet slipped out from underneath him, causing him to fall belly-down onto the grass. The upside-down mower fell on top of the employee, causing multiple traumatic injuries.

An interview of the crew leader revealed that the victim had been employed by the company for several months and got to where he was rather good using the subject mower on other projects. The crew leader also stated that he had not measured the slope of an incline for the purposes of mowing nor does he know the maximum allowable slope of the mowers that he uses.

During the inspection, the CSHO could tell that the slope of the subject incline was not uniform, so three measurements were taken at the following locations: at the foot of the incline near the mower's resting position, in the middle, and at the top. The respective slope measurements are as follows: 16.6 degrees, 22 degrees, and 25.3 degrees. The Operator's Manual of the mower revealed that the maximum slope for operation is 20 degrees.

**Citation(s) as Originally Issued**

A complete inspection was conducted at the accident scene. Some of the items cited may not directly relate to the fatality.

Mower Rollover—Insp # 1698362 Common Grounds Landscape Management, Inc.

**Citation 1 Item 1**

**Type of Violation: Serious**

**\$4000**

**TCA 50-3-105(1):** The employer did not furnish employment and a place of employment which were free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees:

In that an employee traveling up a 22-to-25-degree slope with a Scag VRide II stand-behind mower was killed when the mower flipped upside down on top of the victim.



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