



Village of Cottage Grove Mower/Slope Safety Policy

Issue Date: March 9 th , 2026	Revision(s):	Pages:
Policy Source: -Cities and Villages Mutual Insurance Company -Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) SEC. 5 (a) (1) General Duty Clause -Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (SPS) Administrative Code SPS 332		
Special Instructions: This policy applies to all municipal employees who operate push mowers, riding mowers, tractor mowers, or specialty mowers.		

POLICY

The Village of Cottage Grove is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all our employees. In addition, The Village of Cottage Grove's goal is to comply with the OSHA SEC 5 (a) (1). General Duty Clause, incorporated by reference in SPS 332 for Public Employee Safety and Health.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure The Village of Cottage Grove's employees' safety and health while operating all types of mowing equipment.

EVALUATING HAZARDOUS MOWING AREAS

The Village of Cottage Grove will take all measures necessary to identify the hazards employees may encounter while mowing. This will be done by surveying all locations mowing is conducted and identifying hazards. Slope angles will be identified using a (digital level, or any other accurate means), and hazardous angles will be determined and documented. The form in Appendix B will be used to identify and document all hazards.

Key hazards that will be identified:

- Slopes
- Drop offs
- Water

- Playgrounds
- High traffic areas
- Roadways and medians
- Other

Key control measures may include:

- Specific equipment use
- Specialized equipment use
- Increased safety/buffer zones (Ex: 5 feet around water)
- Specific mowing times (Ex: Early morning around playgrounds or late afternoon to avoid condensation)
- Specific mowing areas (Ex: Only mowing certain areas of a large slope. Indicated by visual cues)
- Contracted out (Ex: When we do not have the equipment to safely mow an area)
- Allowing natural growth (not mowing)
- Planting decorative flowers or plants
- Proper work zone set-up
- Other

Refer to Appendix A for completed survey of specific hazards and control measures.

SAFE MOWING OF SLOPES

Performing mowing operations on slopes can be extremely dangerous. Therefore, The Village of Cottage Grove will make every attempt to eliminate the mowing of hazardous slopes. If that is not feasible, The Village of Cottage Grove will ensure employees perform this safely. It is recommended that employees consult the information provided in the list below to aid in selection of the proper mower (s) for the job.

Below are the mowers available for use and the angle limits specified by the manufacturer.

Make	Model	Year	Maximum angle limit
Toro Wing Mower	4000D	2019	15°
Toro Wing Mower	4000D	2021	15°
Toro Wing Mower	4000D	2024	15°
Toro Zero Turn w/bagger	7200	2016	15°
Toro Zero Turn	7200	2020	15°

****Do not operate mowers on slopes that exceed the angle limits specified by the manufacturer****

If such information is not available, follow the general guidelines below:

0–15-degree slope: Riding mowers, tractor mowers, push mowers, and string trimmers may be used.

Greater than 15 degrees: Push mowers, slope mowers, string trimmers may be used or do not mow and allow natural growth.

If the slope angle is so excessive that push mowing cannot be accomplished safely, the slope must not be mowed, and an alternate plan must be implemented.

In general, on slopes, mow up and down when using riding mowers and side to side when using push mowers.

GENERAL SAFETY RULES

All employees must follow the following safety rules:

- Do not use riding equipment in areas where the drive wheels are within five feet (measured from the outside wheel edge) of unprotected edges of retaining walls, embankments, levees, etc. Use a push mower or string trimmer in these areas.
- When using mowers near ponds, creeks, golf course water hazards, or other bodies of water, establish a safety zone to ensure the mower is a safe distance from those hazards.
- Use caution when operating equipment near playgrounds, roadways, paths, sidewalks, athletic fields, or any areas where pedestrians are present.
- Use extreme caution on wet grass. Reduce speed and avoid sudden or sharp turns. Early morning mowing when the grass is wet (or after rain) should not be attempted on a slope.
- Roll over protection structures such as guards, bars, and shields must be securely in place before mowing begins. If the operator must lower the structure for clearance, they must put them back into service as soon as possible after clearing the area.
- When turning a push mower on a slope, while mowing side to side, ensure the blade faces downhill.
- Do not exit the mower (from seated position) until the blades have fully stopped.
- Seatbelts must always be worn.
- Use 3 points of contact when getting on/off riding equipment.
- Conduct pre and post use inspections.
- Survey the terrain for hazards such as large rocks, garbage, signs, tree stumps, wet spots, soft spots, etc. before mowing.
- Read and understand equipment manuals before first use.
- Decrease speed when the mower is traveling down slopes and around sharp corners.
- Pay increased attention when backing.
- Pay increased attention in low-light situations.
- Never leave a mower unattended on a slope
- Follow the safe shutdown procedure if you are leaving a mower unattended.
- Do not alter or remove any safety devices.
- Do not bungee cord or otherwise secure the lawn chute/deflector in the upright position.
- Do not use your hands to clear debris from underneath the mower. Use a stick or other object.

- Halt mowing activity and talk to your supervisor if you think any situation is too dangerous.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The personal protective equipment (PPE) required will vary based on the hazards present and equipment being used. Refer to The Village of Cottage Grove’ PPE Hazard Assessment as well as the owner’s manual for specific information on required PPE. The chart below can be used as a quick reference.

Equipment	Required PPE
Toro Wing Mowers	Safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants, safety shoes/boots
Toro Zero Turn with bagger	Safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants, safety shoes/boots
Toro Zero Turn	Safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants, safety shoes/boots
All string trimmers	Safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants, safety shoes/boots, protective gloves
All normal push mowers	Safety glasses, hearing protection, long pants, safety shoes/boots

Employees must wear all required PPE. If there are any questions or concerns, talk with your immediate supervisor. Reference The Village of Cottage Grove’s PPE policy for additional information regarding proper fit, maintenance, cost, and use of PPE.

TRAINING

The Village of Cottage Grove will train employees in the following:

- Safe operation of any equipment they will be operating
- Pre and post use inspections
- Different terrain and hazardous terrain conditions
- Hazards they will encounter (See Appendix A)
- Control measures on the specific hazards they will encounter (See Appendix A)
- All general safety rules to be followed
- Hazard recognition
- Avoidance of unsafe conditions
- Personal Protective Equipment
- All other areas of this policy

In-depth training will take place before an employee performs any mowing operation. Annual refresher training will take place thereafter before mowing season begins.

POLICY REVIEWS

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Park Superintendent to ensure that any changes in applicable safety standards, operational procedures, or safe practices that have occurred will be incorporated to ensure compliance.

APPENDIX REFERENCE INFORMATION

- Appendix A Hazardous Mowing Areas
- Appendix B Hazardous Mowing Area Evaluation Form
- Appendix C Implementation Guide

Hazardous Mowing Areas

Location: Bakken Pickleball Detention area

Hazard: 17° slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard areas identified

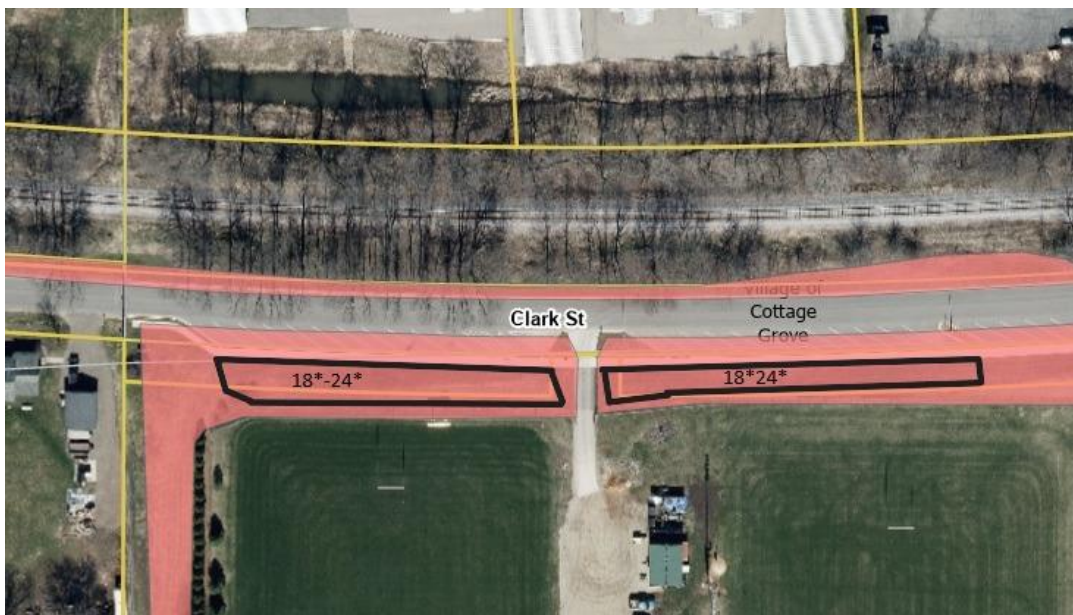


Location: Rugby hill on Clarke St.

Hazard: 18 - 24° slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Bark Park- Large dog area, Large Hill

Hazard: 15°- 17° slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Bark Park- Large dog area between fences

Hazard: 24° slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Bark Park- Ditch next to trail

Hazard: 18°- 19° slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Summit Credit Union- Slope next to trees

Hazard: 20 - 22° Slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified

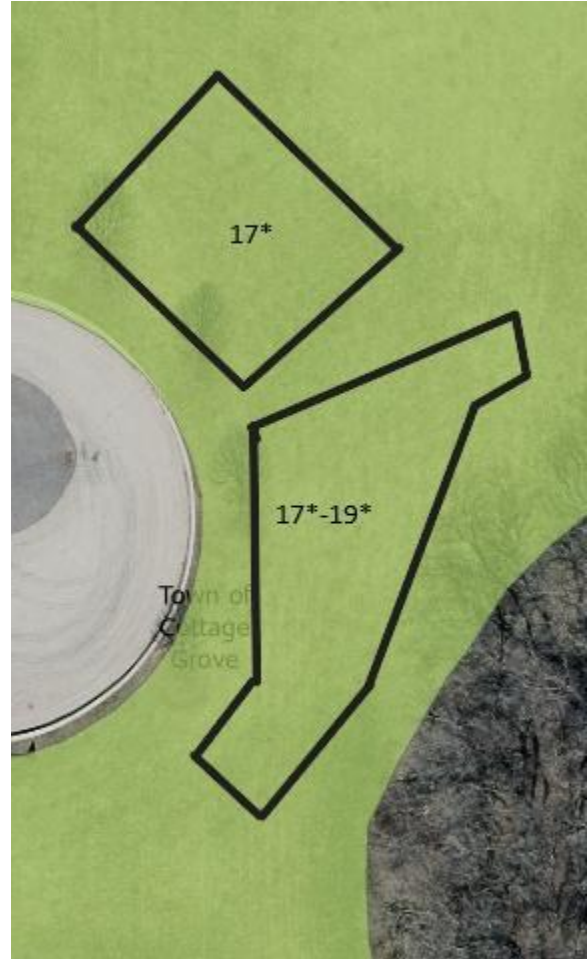


Location: Town of Cottage Grove Fire Station (East side)

Hazard: 17°- 19° Slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Fireman's Ballpark Seating Area

Hazard: 22° - 26° Slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



Location: Lake Ridge Bank- Intersection of W. Cottage Grove Rd. and W. Oak St.

Hazard: 18° - 26° Slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified



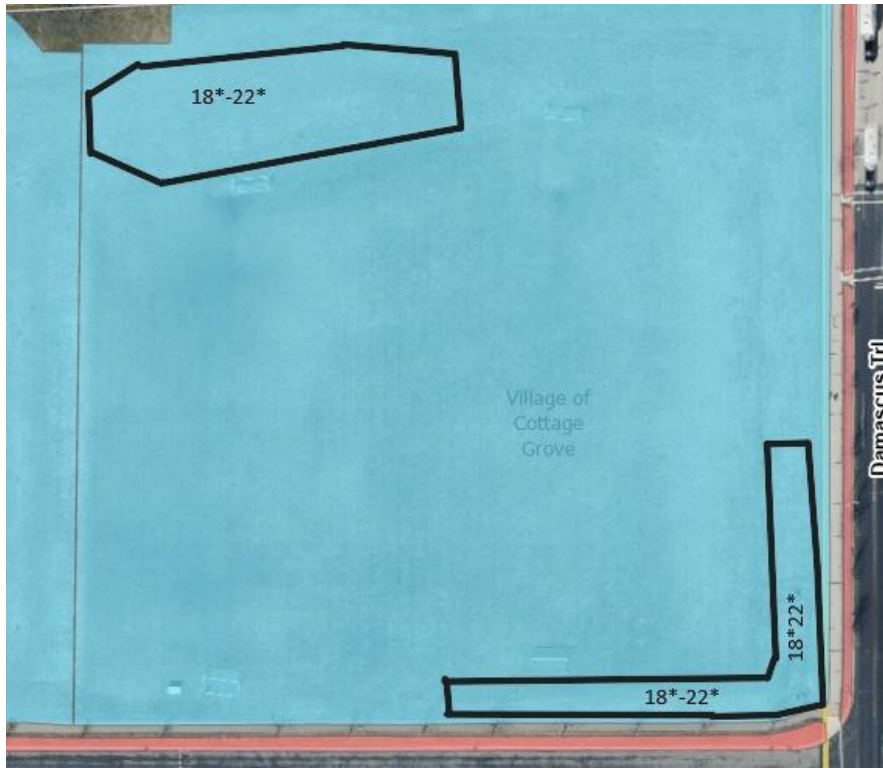
Location: Glacial Drumlin School – Soccer fields

Hazard: 18° - 22° Slope

Control: Use slope mower, push mower, string trimmer, or do not mow and allow natural growth.

Hazard Areas Identified





Hazardous Mowing Area Evaluation Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Key hazards that will be identified:	Key control measures may include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slopes • Drop offs • Water • Playgrounds • High traffic areas • Roadways and medians • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific equipment use • Specialized equipment use • Increased safety/buffer zones (Ex: 5 feet around water) • Specific mowing times (Ex: Early morning around playgrounds or late afternoon to avoid condensation) • Specific mowing areas (Ex: Only mowing certain areas of a large slope. Indicated by visual cues) • Contracted out (Ex: When we do not have the equipment to safely mow an area) • Allowing natural growth (not mowing) • Planting decorative flowers or plants • Proper work zone set-up • Other

Identified Slopes

If a slope has multiple angles, indicate which section of the slope you are referring to. Or use the highest angle of the entire slope.

No slopes in this location: _____

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Location of slope:
Slope angle:
Control:

Other Identified Hazards

No hazards in this location: _____

Hazard:
Location of Hazard:
Control:

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Location of Hazard:
Control:

Implementation Guide

Step 1- Review the policy to become familiar with the contents.

Step 2- Identify all mowing areas that may meet the requirements of more than 15°.

Step 3- Survey each mowing location to determine hazards. This can be accomplished by using Appendix B for each location. Slopes can be determined by using the process in step 3A or any other effective and accurate means.

Step 3A-

1. Purchase the recommended equipment to use: 4' long level that reads degrees or percentages or a digital protractor.
2. Look at the entire slope from multiple vantage points.
3. Select a minimum of 3 of the steepest areas on the entire slope. If needed, more areas should be measured.
4. Once at the specific area, place the level down and push flat against the surface.



5. Place the angle gauge in the center of the level to obtain the reading. Always round up to the whole number. Ex- Reading says 20.2, round up to 21.0



6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 at all other selected areas.

7. Review the data collected and use the highest reading to determine the angle of the entire slope.

- a. If you do not want to designate the entire slope using the highest reading, you may divide the slope into sections. The angle must be determined for each section, and the sections must be separated by visual markers. This will allow certain sections to be mowed with equipment that is suitable for the determined slope angle.

Step 4- Transfer all information from each evaluation form to appendix A. After all the evaluation forms have been transferred into the policy (appendix A), save them for your records.

Step 5- Completely fill out the chart in the “SAFE MOWING OF SLOPES” section. If you do not have the specific information needed, contact the manufacturer. If the information cannot be found, follow the general guidelines in the policy.

Step 6- Add any safety rules to the “GENERAL SAFETY RULES” section that you feel should be added. Delete anything that does not apply to your municipality.

Step 7- Ensure that you have completed a PPE hazard assessment for each task/piece of equipment. Then fill in the chart in the PPE section.

Step 8- Add any information that may be missing to the overall policy and delete anything that does not fit.

Step 9- Review the policy and finalize.

Step 10- Train employees on the policy and then implement.

Step 11- Conduct the safety training outlined in the policy. The CVMIC eLearning on mower and slope safety can be used to cover the general topics. The municipality should create their own training for specific topics (i.e. safe operation of their equipment). Annual refresher training should occur thereafter.

Step 12- Review the policy annually and make necessary changes.