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Lawnmower amputations prompt safety advice

As spring approaches and people's attention turns to yard clean-ups, NSW Ambulance paramedics are stressing the importance of safety, including never reaching into a lawnmower while it is in operation.

Chief Inspector Brian Parsell said that, unfortunately, amputations from lawnmowers were more frequent than people realised.

A snapshot of the January-February summer months this year showed at least seven people had either amputated or severed the tips of fingers and toes from reaching into lawnmowers, or running lawn mowers over their feet.

Other garden implements have included hedge trimmers, garden shears, axes and whipper snippers.

In the past two months, incidents have included:

- Yennora: A 53-year-old Yennora female suffering serious foot injury from a lawnmower on August 17;
- Sandy Beach: 21-year-old man amputating top of thumb while chopping wood on August 17;
- Wagga Wagga: 77-year-old man amputating thumb with an axe on August 17;
- Eschol Park: 23-year-old male amputating top of finger on lawnmower on August 13;
- Colyton: 50-year-old male partially amputating a thumb with an axe on August 4;
- New Lambton: 38-year-old male suffering a hand injury from lawnmower on July 26;
- Horsley Park: 71-year-old male cutting off tips of two fingers with a ride-on mower on July 13.

Chief Insp Parsell said people should never place their fingers or toes under a lawnmower.

"If you need to clear the mower, turn it off first. Follow the lawnmower operator's manual and make sure protective guards, shields, the grass catcher and other types of safety equipment are used and that your mower is in good condition," he said.

"Also, clear the mowing area of any objects such as stones that can be picked up and thrown by the mower blades.

"Protective clothing and eyewear should also be worn – thongs are definitely off the list."

Chief Insp Parsell said children should be kept at a safe distance from a mower, whipper snipper or any other garden device and that they never be allowed to ride on a ride-on lawn mower.

In the event of serious injury, he said people should call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

"Bystanders should remove the patient from danger and stop any life-threatening haemorrhages.

"If you have severed any digits or a limb, turn off the machinery, stop the bleeding, call an ambulance, and then look for or attend to the missing body part."

Chief Insp Parsell said severed limbs and digits should not be put directly on ice.

"Put them in a plastic bag; put that bag in another bag and then put it in cool, tepid water or iced water. But don't freeze it. If you freeze the tissue, you'll kill it," he said.

Is your URGENCY an EMERGENCY?