



The Equipment Ownership Cost Guide

A mower costs money before it does a single billable hour of work. This guide shows the real per-hour ownership cost, and uses it to answer two real decisions: buy another, or repair the one you have.

Every mower has a cost that shows up whether or not it mows a single lawn that day: depreciation, fuel, and maintenance, averaged over its working life. Knowing that per-hour number turns two common guesses, whether to buy another mower and whether to repair or replace one, into an actual calculation instead of a gut call.

The number behind every equipment decision

Equipment hourly cost has three parts: depreciation (purchase price minus resale value, spread across the mower's useful life in hours), fuel, and maintenance. A \$12,000 zero-turn mower with a \$3,000 resale value and a 4,000-hour useful life depreciates at \$2.25/hour. Add the class's default fuel (\$6.50/hour) and maintenance (\$1.50/hour) and total ownership cost is \$10.25/hour, before the mower earns a single billable dollar.

That number is the foundation both decisions below build on.

Should I buy another mower, worked through

A second mower that saves 10 hours of crew labor a week, and itself runs 10 hours a week, across a 35-week season: annual ownership cost is $\$10.25/\text{hour} \times 10 \text{ hours} \times 35 \text{ weeks} = \$3,587.50$. Annual labor savings at the \$26.00 loaded rate is $\$26.00 \times 10 \times 35 = \$9,100$.

Net annual benefit: $\$9,100 \text{ minus } \$3,587.50 = \$5,512.50$. Payback on the \$12,000 purchase: about 2.2 years. A mower that saves real labor hours pays for itself faster than the sticker price alone suggests.

Repair or replace, worked through

A \$1,800 repair quote, with an estimated 400 hours of remaining life, costs $\$1,800 / 400 = \$4.50/\text{hour}$ just in repair cost. Add fuel and maintenance ($\$6.50 + \1.50) and the repaired mower's total cost is \$12.50/hour.

Compare that to the \$10.25/hour full ownership cost of buying new (the same math from the first section). Replace wins here, by \$2.25/hour, because the repair cost per remaining hour is high enough on its own to exceed what a new mower costs across its full life. A cheaper repair, or more

remaining hours, could flip this the other way, run your own numbers rather than assuming either option automatically wins.

Key takeaway. Equipment cost is a per-hour number, not a purchase-price number. Once you have it, buying another mower and repairing versus replacing one are the same calculation applied twice.

Assumptions

- The worked examples use a \$12,000 zero-turn mower with a \$3,000 resale value and the site's default useful life, fuel, and maintenance figures for that class.

Frequently asked questions

Why does a repair that costs less than a new mower sometimes lose to replacing?

Because the repair cost is spread over the mower's remaining hours, which is usually far fewer than a new mower's full useful life. A \$1,800 repair over 400 hours is \$4.50/hour, more per hour than a \$12,000 mower spread over 4,000 hours (\$2.25/hour depreciation), even though the total dollar amount is much smaller.

Does buying another mower always pay for itself?

No. It depends entirely on how many labor hours it actually saves relative to how much it runs and what it cost. A mower that mostly sits idle, or barely speeds up the work, can have a negative net annual benefit, always run the calculator on your own utilization, not just the purchase price.

What is not included in this hourly cost?

Financing interest if the mower is purchased on credit, insurance specific to the equipment, and storage. These can be added as overrides if they are material to your business.

How often should I recheck the fuel and maintenance defaults?

At least once a season, fuel prices move with the market and maintenance costs drift as equipment ages. Enter your own numbers whenever you know them rather than relying on the class default.

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