Don’t Blow Off Snowblower Hazards

SEASONAL SAFETY

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If you have snow at your workplace, you and your workers may want to say a little thank you to the late Arthur Sicard. Who’s Arthur Sicard? He’s the inventor of the snowblower. And while he’s dead now, his legacy lives on. Those fabulous machines eat snow for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Unfortunately, they can also chew the operator up if you’re not careful.

What’s the Danger Posed by Snowblowers?

Blowing snow sure beats shoveling it. But using this snow removal method presents some serious hazards including lacerations and amputations. Every year thousands are treated for injuries related to the use of power snow shovels and snowblowers, including lacerations, finger amputations and bone fractures, many of which occurred when machine operators tried to dislodge impacted snow from the chute.

There are also musculoskeletal injuries to consider. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons warns that the improper use of snowblowers, coupled with muscles being overextended and overexerted, can wreak havoc on the shoulders, wrists and backs.

Safety Tips for Snowblower Operators

If you have a snowblower at your workplace – to keep the operator safe – and those around them – safe, keep these points in mind while operating snowblowers:

1. Dress appropriately, including slip-resistant footwear.
2. Read the safety manual.
3. Add fuel before starting the machine, not while the machine is hot.
4. Make sure all guards and shields are in place and use only approved accessories and attachments.
5. Prior to operation, inspect the area and clear it of foreign objects that could fly out of the machine.
6. Adjust the collector housing so it won’t strike gravel or rock surfaces.
7. Clear bystanders from the work area.

8. Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
9. Be aware of carbon monoxide poisoning hazards, and don’t run the engine in enclosed areas.
10. Always stop the engine prior to making machine adjustments or repairs.
11. Mark the locations of water and gas shut-off valves prior to clearing snow.
12. Always know where the power cord is when using an electric snowblower.
13. Direct the snow away from buildings, vehicles and pedestrians.
14. Do not clear snow from steep slopes.
15. Do not leave the snowblower running unattended.
16. Pace yourself.

Operating a snowblower safely doesn’t require technical training; it only requires a little awareness and forethought. Keep these tips in mind if you manage someone or you yourself are required to use a snowblower and your experience with Arthur Sicard’s brainchild is much more likely to be a safe and productive one.