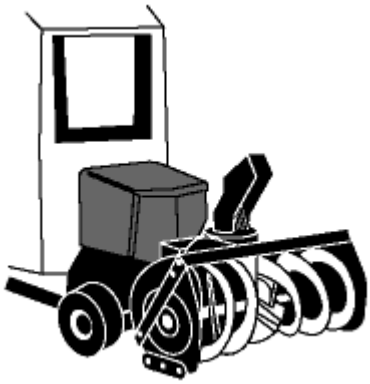
Landscaping – Snow Blower – Fact Sheets

DO SNOW BLOWERS ELIMINATE RISK FOR INJURY DUE TO SNOW REMOVAL?

If you use a snow blower, it is important to recognize that this machine doesn't make snow removal either effortless or risk-free. While not as strenuous as manual shovelling (see OSH Answers Shovelling – Snow), using a snow blower remains a physical labour that is done outdoors in the snow and cold. Snow blowers have various degrees of effectiveness depending on their design and price. Snow blowers also cannot remove the build-up of ice under the snow.



How do I use a snow blower safely?

When using a snow blower, follow all safety practices in the owner/operator manual before starting and operating the unit. Make sure you understand the functions of all controls and how to operate them, and how to STOP in an emergency. Failure to follow instructions could result in personal injury and/or damage to the unit.

To minimize the potential for discomfort, injury and any possible mishaps, follow the safety rules below:

DO

- Operate a unit only when there is good visibility and light. Falling snow, fog, etc. can reduce vision.
- Wear adequate winter outer garments and proper footwear to improve footing on slippery surfaces. See OSH Answers Cold Environments – Working in the

Cold.
- Wear adequate safety gear, including safety glasses with side shields, appropriate hearing protection and protective gloves.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing, scarves, jewelry or anything that may get caught in rotating parts.
- Take breaks as needed. Do not overexert.

DO NOT

- Do not operate if you are not familiar with how to use the machine safely.
- Do not operate a unit during or after the use of medication, drugs or alcohol. Safe operation requires your complete and unimpaired attention at all times.

What should you do before starting the engine?

DO

- Keep children and people away from the operating area.
- Clear area of operation of any unwanted objects and debris. Thrown objects such as small branches or rocks can cause injury or damage the machine.
- Adjust runners to clear gravel or crushed rock surfaces safely.
- Check fuel and oil levels before starting gas powered engines.
- Disengage all clutches before starting an engine.
- Use only approved extension cords and receptacles when operating an electric machine or when starting units equipped with an electric starter.

DO NOT

- DO NOT connect electric starter cord to any wiring system that is not a three-wire grounded system.

What is the safe way of operating a snow blower?

DO

- Always allow unit and engine to adjust to outdoor temperatures before clearing snow.
- Start a gas engine model outside, not in a shed or garage. Carbon monoxide can accumulate in enclosed spaces.
- Use an outdoor extension cord for an electric model that is rated for your machine, and that is connected to ground-fault circuit interrupting (GFCI) protection. Be aware of the cord’s location at all times.
- Stay alert for any unexpected hazard.
- Always be aware of traffic and pedestrians when operating along streets, curbs, or sidewalks.
- Always be sure of your footing, especially when operating in reverse or leaving the operator’s position. Walk, never run, during operation.
- Avoid uneven and rough terrain. Be extra cautious while operating near drop-offs, ditches, or embankments. Units can suddenly turn over if a wheel is over the edge of a cliff or ditch, or if an edge caves in.
- Use extreme caution on gravel surfaces. Adjust runners so a scraper blade does not contact gravel.
- Keep all movement on slopes slow and gradual.
- Use a slow speed to avoid stops or shifts on slopes.

- Avoid starting or stopping on a slope.
- Slow down and turn corners slowly.
- Always look down and behind before and while backing.
- Disengage attachment drive when traveling from one work area to another.
- Run the unit a few minutes after clearing snow to prevent freeze-up of attachment.

DO NOT

- Do not operate unless proper guards, plates or other protective devices are in place and working properly.
- Do not operate on steep slopes.
- Do not clear snow across the face of slopes.
- Do not make sudden changes in speed or direction.
- Do not park units on a slope unless absolutely necessary. When parking on a slope always block the wheels.
- Do not overload the machine capacity by attempting to clear snow at too fast a rate.
- Do not operate in reverse unless absolutely necessary. Always back up slowly.
- Do not direct discharge toward persons.
- Do not leave a running unit unattended. Always shut off engine and remove the key before leaving a unit.

How can you avoid troubles?

- Abnormal vibrations are a warning sign. Stop the machine, then clean and inspect.
- Striking a foreign object can damage a unit. Immediately stop the unit and engine and inspect for causes or damage.
- Before cleaning or inspecting
    - turn off the machine
    - remove key
    - allow all moving parts to stop
    - allow hot parts to cool
    - remove wire from spark plug
- Always allow an engine to cool before servicing.
- Do not use your hands to remove materials. Fingers have been amputated when the blade has rotated unexpectedly. Use a small shovel, tool, or stick instead.

What is the proper way of fueling snow blowers?

DO

- Fuel is highly flammable and its vapours are explosive. Handle with care. Use an approved fuel container.
- Wait until the engine has cooled before refilling.
- Refuel outdoors.
- Remove the fuel cap slowly to release any pressure.
- Replace a fuel cap securely and clean up spilled fuel.
- Keep a portable fire extinguisher nearby when refuelling.

DO NOT

- NO smoking, NO sparks, NO flames.
- Do not fill a fuel tank when an engine is running, or when hot from operating.
- Do not fill or drain a fuel tank indoors.

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