General Snow Blower Safety

Toolbox Talk Lesson Plan

Snow blower accidents lead to roughly 3,600 finger injuries each year, including amputations, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The typical cause: Operators try to clear a clogged auger or discharge chute with their hands.

REMEMBER: There is little clearance between the outer ends of the auger/impeller and the inside surface of the housing. An injury can result if the operator puts a hand in the path of a turning auger/impeller when attempting to clear the plugged area, without turning off the engine.

Operators *should read and understand the Operator's Manual* at the beginning of each snow throwing season and heed the information on this talk. *Check snow blower before use to make sure it is functioning properly. Be sure that the safety guards are in place. Don't run gasoline-powered equipment indoors because of the danger of carbon monoxide exposure. Do a circle check to look for problems and obstructions.*

- Guards, shields, deflectors, and warning decals are provided for your protection and that of others.
- Do not modify, change, bypass or disable the auger/impeller interlock and traction interlock
- Do not disable any safety feature because it seems to be an inconvenience

Prepare for the climate: Staying warm and dry is important to prevent hypothermia, a dangerous lowering of the body's core temperature. Dress in layers of clothing, so you can remove outerwear if you get too warm. Protect your hands and toes from freezing which may cause frostbite. Wear waterproof footwear and clothing, Boots with anti-skid features can prevent falling on the ice often found on paved surfaces under the snow. While walking behind a snow blower, move steadily and maintain your balance. Keep a firm grip on handles.

Types of gas blowers, their operating Characteristics and Hazards

Single-stage snow blowers use an auger assembly made from a combination of metal and plastic. The auger spins at high speed to chip ice and snow, collect it, and direct it out of a discharge chute. Though not propelled by engine-driven wheels, the spinning auger contacts the clearing surface and pulls the assembly forward.

Two-Stage blowers have an additional spinning impeller behind the snow collection auger. The impeller acts like a pump. It collects the snow churned by the main auger and pushes it from the discharge chute at increased speed. Unlike a Single-stage model, the clearing auger doesn't contact the clearing surface. Instead, the front of the blower rides on adjustable metal plates or skids. The skids control the clearing height of the main auger.

Operating Guidelines: Walk slowly and carefully so you don't slip, and keep a firm hold on the machine. If you try to remove snow too quickly you will overload the machine. Stay away from the discharge opening to prevent entanglement or being struck by objects propelled by the blades. Do not use a snow thrower on steep slopes. Make sure you don't hit obstructions such as curbs or tree roots.

Never put your hand in any part of the equipment while the machine is running. Keep hands and other parts of the body away from the engine and muffler when it's hot to avoid a severe burn. First turn off the engine, wait for all moving parts to stop and disconnect the spark plug wire so the machine cannot accidentally start up. Use a tool to clear ice or snow build-up. Never use your hand or fingers, to remove any snow or ice buildup.