Snow Thrower Safety Talk



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

A **snow thrower** is single-stage machine, meaning it gathers snow and tosses it out a chute in a single motion. The power generated by a horizontal spinning auger picks up the snow while also creating the force that expels snow out of a discharge chute, usually to a distance of 15 to 25 feet away.

FUNCTIONALITY

Because they're smaller and less powerful than snow blowers, snow throwers are better suited to removing light snow accumulations of about eight to nine inches, maximum. The top of the front intake chute on a snow blower is higher than it is on a snow thrower, so snow blowers can tackle deeper drifts and accumulations of 15 inches or more. In addition, small snow throwers are often not self-propelled, which also makes it more difficult for the operator to physically push them in thicker snow accumulations.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

Snow blowers or throwers are useful, but according to the U.S. Product Consumer Safety Commission, more than 4,000 people visit the emergency room every year due to snow blower injuries.

Fingers/Hands

The most common injury associated with snow blowers involves damage to the fingers and hands due to people trying to unclog the machine with their bare hands. This should be avoided at all times because the revolving parts of the impeller blades can cause serious cuts and even amputation.

Clogging

If the machine clogs, the first step should be to turn it off and disengage the clutch. Give at least 5 minutes for the blades to stop revolving, and use a tool such as a stick or the handle of a broom to unclog the auger or discharge chute.

Know the Snow

Caution should be exercised when directing the discharge chute. Keep the chute out of the path of people passing by and other delicate areas. There is always a risk of hard objects being trapped in the snow blower and being discharged with a lot of

force from the chute, causing damage to other surfaces upon impact.

Weather Dangers

The snow blower should only be operated when there are good light and visibility. Operating the machine in the dark or when it is raining/snowing can lead to **risks** such as **slippery conditions, clogging of the machine, or reduced visibility of oncoming objects.**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Snow throwers, are an easy way to keep the snow off your driveway or commercial premises during the winter months. Like any piece of power equipment, snow thrower safety should be a top priority. With these snow throwers tips, you can keep the snow off your premises safely in less time and energy than a shovel.

THE TURN – ON TIPS

- Make sure that you are familiar with all snow thrower controls and their proper operation. Also, you've read the valuable snow thrower safety tips in the operator's manual. It's important to know how to stop the snow thrower and disengage it quickly.
- Never allow children under 14 years of age to operate a snow thrower. Children 14 and over should read and understand the instructions and safe operation practices that are described in the manual. Be sure to go over snow thrower safety with children over 14 before they power on the snow thrower.
- Plan the pattern for your snow thrower to avoid discharge of material towards roads, bystanders, your home and other objects. Thrown objects can cause serious injury.
- Inspect the area where the snow thrower is to be used. Be sure to remove all doormats, newspapers, sticks, boards and other objects which could be tripped over or thrown by the snow thrower auger/impeller.
- For proper snow thrower safety, always wear protective eyewear during operation. It is also important to use safety equipment while performing an adjustment or repair to protect your eyes.
- Be aware that clothing can become entangled in moving parts of the snow thrower. Do not wear jewelry, long scarves or other loose clothing items while operating a snow thrower.
- For snow throwers with an electric start engine, be sure to use a grounded three-wire extension cord and receptacle.
- To clear gravel or crushed rocks, adjust the snow thrower collector housing height.
- Before starting the snow thrower engine, be sure to disengage all control levers.

OFF AND RUNNING

- Keep snow thrower safety as your goal once the engine is started. Never attempt to make any adjustments or repairs to the snow thrower while the engine is running, except where specifically mentioned in the operator's manual.
- Create a safety area around the snow thrower to keep bystanders, pets and children away from the equipment. The safety area should be at least 75 feet around the snow thrower while it is in operation. Stop the snow thrower if anyone enters the area.
- Keeping snow thrower safety in mind, exercise caution to avoid slipping or falling. When the snow thrower is in reverse, pay special attention to your footing.

- It will take a moment for the snow thrower to adjust to cold weather. Before clearing snow, let the engine and machine adjust to outdoor temperatures.
- For snow thrower operation safety, do not use a snow thrower on steep slopes. Use extreme caution when clearing snow from mild slopes. If it is snowing hard or there is minimal visibility, do not use the snow thrower.
- When the snow thrower engine is on, never use your hands to clear a clogged chute assembly. Shut off engine and remain behind the handles until all moving parts have stopped before unclogging. Notice that the snow thrower chute clean-out tool is conveniently clipped to the rear of the auger housing. Use it to safely clean out the snow thrower chute.

FINAL WORD

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people suffer serious damage to their fingers or hands due to the improper handling of snow blowers. Most commonly, the tips of the fingers need to be amputated, so preventing the injury initially is key.

Injuries usually occur when the snow is heavy, wet, or has accumulated several inches. The snow clogs the exit chute of the machine, and the person using the machine tries to unclog this using his/her hand. Unfortunately, the blades still can rotate when the machine is off, and these cut whatever is in their path.