

Snow Blower Safety

- **North Dakota winters can mean that snow blowers get a workout. Every winter approximately 6,000 people nationwide are treated in emergency rooms for injuries suffered while using snow blowers or snow throwers. The majority of these injuries seem concentrated during early, heavy snows. Follow these tips to keep you safe while clearing snow:**
- Become familiar with your machine. Read and understand the operator's manual and familiarize yourself with all the controls. Leave all of the safety features intact. Check your snow blower every time before you use it and re-familiarize yourself with it before the season begins. Know how to stop the machine quickly.
- Always keep hands and feet away from all moving parts of the machine. Never place your hands in the auger. If the machine clogs while removing snow, shut the machine off and wait for all moving parts to stop. Some manufacturers recommend removing the spark plug wire from the spark plug. Remove snow with a stick or a similar instrument. Be prepared for a clogged machine to jump once the obstruction has been cleared.
- Never leave a machine running unattended. Shut the snow blower off if you must leave for even a small amount of time. Never re-fuel the machine while running or if the engine is hot. Add fuel outdoors, as the vapors are highly flammable, explosive and dangerous if inhaled. There is also a risk for burns as parts of the machine, especially the engine and muffler, become extremely hot.
- Never store the machine in the house or inside a building where open sparks or flames are present. Also, do not store it next to water heaters or furnaces.
- Walk behind the machine, keeping a firm grip on the handles at all times. Work the snow slowly; there will be less chance for clogging if you don't rush the job. If you need to back up or change directions do so carefully to avoid tripping. Be prepared to release the snow thrower and/or the traction drive if you lose your footing. Be careful of curbing or holes in the pavement. If you must clear snow from a sloped surface, clear by going up and down, not across.
- Before beginning to remove snow, make sure the area is clear. Remove doormats or any other objects that may be picked up by the machine. Some machines are capable of throwing snow at distances of 30' or greater. Such machines can also propel rocks or other objects at a great velocity. Projectile injuries can occur. Because of this danger, it is advisable to wear protective goggles while removing snow. Take special care to discharge snow away from people, buildings or vehicles. If you use an electric snow thrower, be aware of the location of the power cord.
- Wear adequate winter clothing while clearing snow. Being outdoors during the winter always carries the risk of frostbite and hypothermia. Dress in layers and wear boots that have good traction on slippery surfaces. Avoid long scarves and outerwear with strings that may become entangled in the moving parts of the machine.
- Only adults or mature teens should operate the machine, and even mature teens should be supervised. Teens should be able to understand the operations of the machine and be of sufficient size and weight to operate the controls comfortably. If there is any doubt, don't take the risk.
- Concentration is the key to safe operation of a snow thrower. Avoid the use of alcohol or other drugs and don't work when you are angry or depressed. Don't wear headphones.
- Removing snow can be a big job, but by taking precautions and having a healthy respect for your machine, you can clear away those mountains of snow.



Check out our course list online for a variety of safety trainings provided across the state at

www.ndsc.org

The North Dakota Safety Council is a private non-profit organization supported through grants, donations, memberships and training.

