

Extension Notes

Personal Column for January 5, 2009

By Gary Hall, Iowa State University Regional Extension Education Director

Think Safety During Snow Removal

Another snowstorm is on the horizon and with that knowledge I finally broke down and bought a snow blower. I have never owned or even run a snow blower in my life. I'm an old guy which is probably why I bought the machine plus the fact my wife is getting tired of scooping all this snow. I'm excited to put the machine to use which may take my mind away from operating it safely. So it is time to take a minute to consider some safety tips on moving that snow.

When I bought the snow blower the salesman checked the machine over and started it up for me. He made sure it has fresh fuel and oil in the machine, checked the tires and the oil levels in the engine and gear box and performed all required lubrication.

I need to find some time to read the owner's manual. It will give me the best insight and instructions on how to properly use each function of the blower.

One thing I have learned while watching my wife scoop snow is that she needs to remove the snow as soon as possible after the snowfall. This is true for snow blower operation too. Packed, wet, frozen or heavy snow will slow down the machine and can cause jams if the snow freezes up in the discharge chute. These jams can be solved by bringing the blower into a warmer area. If that isn't possible try using hot water, but be sure to avoid refreezing of the water.

Never put a hand in the blower unless the machine is turned off. A snow blower essentially operates like a lawn mower. It is important to clear branches and rocks out of the path. I never had this problem when my wife was moving snow. When rocks and branches get into a snow blower they can go right through my neighbor's window. Also, if you are removing snow from an incline always go downhill at a slow speed.

Those of you who have lived in north Iowa for long know that when blowing snow, shoot it away from sidewalks or the house. When shoveling snow I always told my wife to dump the snow in the lawn which is also true for blowing snow. I'll also be careful to avoid building snow windrows uphill from drives and walks. This will prevent the snow from thawing and then freezing across pathways.

I'm looking forward to having this snow blower provide a semi-retirement for my wife and her snow shoveling career. All I have to do is follow these snow blowing tips to be sure that retirement lasts for a long time.

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