



**A weekly question/answer column**

**Do You Have Snowblower Safety Tips?**

*Richard Beard\* answers:*

Before the snow is knee deep in your driveway, it would be wise to review the operating instructions and safety precautions for your snowblower. Most snowblower injuries occur in the early winter season during heavy snowfall. Consider the following tips for safety.

- Before operating the snowblower, check the oil level, fill the fuel tank and make sure the machine's engine, rotors, augers, and impellers are free to rotate. If you have an electric snowblower, examine the extension cord and replace it if it is damaged. Make sure the grounding prong is in place and the snowblower is operated only when properly grounded.
- When operating the snowblower, do not allow the discharge chute to spray snow on people or animals, since the snowblower can also throw stones, ice and other objects. Never leave the snowblower running unattended, and do not allow inexperienced adults or children to operate it.
- Do not disable safety mechanisms or lockout devices, and know how to stop the engine quickly in case of emergency. Make sure all rotating parts have stopped turning before initiating adjustments. There is less clogging if you don't rush the job. Be prepared for a clogged machine to jump when it is freed.
- Never attempt to clear debris or blockages from the machine without shutting off the engine. The auger, which bites into and throws the snow, can be especially dangerous. Never place your hands in the snow chute/thrower or around the blades of the snowblower. (A 3-foot long wooden broom handle works well.) If the machine requires repair or the auger is blocked, turn it off and disconnect the spark plug wire before attempting to correct the problem.

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