

Winter Snow Blower Prep and Start Up Process

In order to ensure that you are prepared for snow removal each year, you should follow this process to make sure your machine is ready to go.

Step 1: Don't wait.

As soon as there is a chill in the air and the leaves begin to turn, you should be thinking about getting your machine ready. In the event that a repair or parts are needed, this give enough time to order and install.

Step 2: Check the fluids.

During the Spring shut down and storage process, all fuel should have been drained out. If this did not happen, you will likely have to drain the tank and carburetor in order to be able to start the machine. There is a small screw on the bottom of the carburetor, if you loosen it, you can drain the fuel out of the entire system. This may take a while depending on how much fuel is left in the tank. Fuel should only be drained and disposed of in approved containers. Contact the equipment department for disposal.

There are 2 types of machines, the first is a straight gas, or 4 stroke motor. This motor DOES NOT require oil to be mixed with the gas to run. The second is a 2 stroke motor. This motor DOES require 2 cycle oil to be mixed with the gas at a particular ratio. Please make sure you know what machine you have and what ratio the mixture should be. This information is normally located on the fuel tank cap. If you have any questions, please contact the equipment department.

The other fluid that needs to be checked is the oil. A 4 stroke motor DOES require oil to be added in a separate tank and it has to be changed regularly just like a car. A 2 cycle motor DOES NOT require oil in a separate tank as it is mixed with the fuel, therefore it does not require oil changes. In a 4 stroke motor, use the dip stick to check the oil level, just like in a car. Not only are you looking for the proper levels, but you are also checking the condition of the oil. If the oil is very dark or smells burnt or smells like gas, it needs to be changed and you should contact the equipment department. If the oil looks good and is low, add just enough oil to raise the level to the full mark. Adding too much oil can damage the motor. The type and weight of the motor oil can vary depending on the machine. It should be noted on the oil cap or on a sticker on the machine. If you have questions, contact the equipment department.

Step 3: Visual Inspection.

Now its time to take a look at the overall condition of the machine. Check the cables and levers and make sure everything moves freely and is not overly corroded. Some corrosion is typical just because of the environments these machines are used in. Make sure the snow chute moves back and forth freely and that the top flap also moves. Make sure the auger handles and the drive handles move easily. Make sure the forward and reverse levers move back and forth as they should. Check the pull cord if your machine has one. Pull out the cord slowly and check for fraying or broken rope. If it is in bad shape, notify the equipment department for repairs.

Next make sure the tires have air in them. The easiest way to do this is simply push down on them with your foot and make certain that they do not go flat. You can also check them with an air gauge if you have one.

The last part of the visual inspection is dealing with sacrificial or expendable parts. These parts are made to wear down and be replaced in order to save the bigger, more expensive parts of the machine from failing. The first part to look at is shear pins. These are usually bolts that go through the auger shaft and are held in place by a nut. If the entire thing is missing, or either end of the bolt / nut combination is missing, then these will need to be replaced. Some of our machines have a place to store spare ones on the machine itself. It is always a good idea to have a couple sets of these on hand.

Next are the scraper bar and wear shoes. The wear shoes are located on either side of the machine and are made of either hard plastic or metal. These are adjustable and are made to wear out in order to prolong the life of the housing and scraper bar. These usually have two side available for use. You can flip them over to use the other side. These should be adjusted via 2 bolts to raise the housing and wear bar off of the surface to be cleared.

The scraper bar is a heavy steel bar that goes across the bottom edge of the back of the housing. This removes the last little bit of snow while protecting the housing from damage. These are usually not adjustable, but there are a few models out there that do have adjustments. The scraper bar should be set about 1/8" above the surface of the ground. This is done by adjusting the wear shoes. This is easily done by loosening all the bolts on the wear shoes on both sides of the machine. Tilt the machine back and place some cardboard or something of similar thickness under the scraper bar. Now with the machine resting on that material, push the wear shoes down tight to the ground and tighten the bolts, do this on both sides. After removing the cardboard or other material from under the machine, you should be able to see a little bit of daylight between the scraper bar and and ground surface.

Step 4: Start up.

Now that you have checked over your machine and made necessary adjustments, it is time to start it up. First you will need to fill up the fuel tank. Make sure you are using the appropriate fuel or fuel mixture for your machine.

Some machines have an electric start feature. This requires an extension cord plugged into a standard outlet at one end and the other to the machine. Other machines have a pull rope like a lawn mower. Some machines may have both.

With the Fuel tank full, you may have an on / off switch, plastic pull key, or standard key switch that needs to be turned to the on position. Next, turn the choke knob or move the choke lever to the on position. Now press the primer bulb, which is on or near the carburetor, several times, you will here the fuel enter the system. Now its time to either pull the rope or use the electric starter to fire the engine.

Once the engine starts, let it run for a minute or two with the choke still in the on position. After it has run, turn the choke to the off position and let the motor run at full capacity. With the motor running, its time to make sure everything works as it should. Turn on the augers and make sure they are turning.

With the augers off, check the drive system. Engage the transmission to make the machine go in both forward and reverse directions. Test each speed if your machine is equipped. If there is a problem with either the drive system or auger system, contact the equipment department for repairs.

The last thing to check is the head light. If your machine is equipped with one, you simply need to make sure it is working.

Step 5: Be ready for snow:

Now that you have confirmed that your machine is ready for snow, its time for you to get ready. First, put your machine away in the designated location. Make sure fuel is stored appropriately. Make sure you have all of the salt spreaders and shovels that you may need and that they are in good working order.

If you have ice melt left from the previous year, make sure it is not a big clump or solid bag. Make sure you contact your manager to let them know if you need more. Do not wait til the last minute.

You should also have a plan for your attire for removing snow. Warm hat, coat, boots and multiple pairs of gloves may be needed for the weather conditions you will be working in. Have a plan and contact your manager if you have any needs or questions.