



# Snow Safety — Snow Blowers

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

## The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to protecting workers from fatal and life-changing events.

Eastern Alliance is here to help. To learn more about Eastern's N3L3 program and access other safety resources, sign in and visit the Safety Tools on [www.easternalliance.com](http://www.easternalliance.com), or contact your Risk Management Consultant for assistance

**1.855.533.3444**

Each year, hundreds of people suffer injury or amputation of their fingers or hands due to the improper handling of snow blowers. We would like to provide information to help you avoid these injuries during the winter season.

The American Society for Surgery of the Hand states that snow blower incidents occur to the operator's dominant hand in 90% of all reported injuries, and amputations of tips of fingers are the most common occurrence.

### Injuries are typically caused when:

Injuries from snow blowers typically occur when the equipment jams or clogs. In this scenario the operator attempts to remedy the situation by reaching into the equipment to free the clog. Although the machine may be off, the blades may still be rotating or begin rotating once the clog is relieved. The contact with the rotating blades results in severe injury to the hand.

The best way to prevent these types of injuries is by reducing the occurrence of jams and clogs.

- Complete snow blower operations frequently throughout snowfalls to minimize the snow accumulation, specifically with icy, sticky, slushy or refrozen snow.
- Apply non-stick snow blower spray to the blower to make it less likely for the snow to stick.
- Operators should keep a brisk pace, as a slow pace will increase the likelihood of clogging.
- Use the de-clogging tool periodically to clean off the equipment. If equipment clogs often, the company should consider investing in a new or more powerful snow blower.
- Equipment should be maintained regularly.

### REMEMBER—if your snow blower jams:

#### Turn it OFF!

- Disengage the clutch.
- Wait at least ten seconds after shutting the machine off to allow impeller blades to completely stop rotating.
- ALWAYS use a stick, broom handle, or unclogging tool to clear impacted/clogged snow.
- NEVER place hands, feet, or any body parts into the intake end or exit chute or around the blades. Keep all body parts away from moving parts.
- Keep all shields, guards and safety devices in place.

### Other Snow Blower Safety Tips:

The company should designate who is permitted to operate the snow blower and ensure adequate coverage with varying shifts and locations. The operators should receive instruction on correct, safe operation prior to operating the equipment and provided refresher training prior to each winter season. The owner's manual should be utilized for specific machine instructions. Operators should demonstrate correct operation.

Safety tips for operators:

- Read the owner's manual thoroughly and understand all of the recommended safety procedures before turning on the snow blower. Ask your supervisor to clarify anything you don't fully understand.



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- The snow can sometimes hide objects that might clog the chute, or otherwise cause damage. A pre-start inspection should be conducted to clear the area of doormats, boards, wires, newspapers and other debris. For those items that may be present year-round or routinely, make note of their location and see these are removed.
- Never throw snow towards people or cars, and never allow anyone in front of the snow blower.
- If you have to repair or unclog your machine, disconnect the spark plug wire, or for electrics, disconnect the cord.
- Dress properly for the job. Wear adequate winter garments and footwear that will improve footing on slippery surfaces. Wear safety glasses and avoid any loose fitting clothing that could get caught in moving parts. Long hair should be tied up.
- Follow all manufacturer recommend maintenance schedules, including pre-season tune up.
- Handle gas carefully. Avoid spillage by using non-spill containers with spouts. Fill up before starting, while the engine is cold. Remember: Store gas in a clean, dry, ventilated area, and never near a pilot light, stove, or heat source. Never smoke around gasoline.
- Do not clear snow across the face of slopes. Use extreme caution when changing direction on slopes. Do not attempt to clear steep slopes. Identify slopes that may need to be cleared during snowfall and create an alternative plan for this process.
- Never operate the snow thrower without good visibility or light.
- Always be sure of proper footing and keep a firm hold on the handles.
- Walk — never run.

**Remember, if you're uncomfortable with the work, aren't quite sure what you're doing, need additional education on the topic, or need additional resources (time, materials, tools, equipment, training, PPE, etc.) to complete the job in a safe manner, communicate this with your supervisor, IMMEDIATELY!**