

Snowblower Injuries, the Invisible Danger



Snow season is here, bringing the need to shovel or use a snowblower. There are more than 3000 snowblower injuries each year resulting in lost fingers, mangled hands, and injured wrists. These types of injuries are life-changing and can be avoided by following a few safety practices. Most accidents occur when snow is wet, heavy, and deep.

Dr. Kalar, surgeon at the Mayo Clinic, says “most people don’t realize that you can still injure your hands even when you turn the snowblower off”. When snow or an object, like a rock or stick, jams the auger or impeller, kinetic rotational energy is captured and stored in the system. As the obstruction is cleared, the impellers forcefully rotate releasing the energy and, within an instant, can capture and sever fingers and break bones even with the snowblower shut off.

This information can be applied to either single or two stage snowblowers.

Here are a few tips on how to avoid **lacerations, the loss of fingers and broken bones**:

- You can spray the auger, impeller, and chute with a cooking spray, WD40 or a commercial snowblower chute spray to help prevent snow from sticking and jamming the blower.
- If a significant snowfall or wet snow is predicted, consider blowing several times during the storm, reducing the workload and clog potential on the blower.
- Upon a jam, turn the snowblower OFF and disengage the clutch, waiting a minute may assist in releasing the impacted impeller’s stored energy.
- **NEVER PUT YOUR HAND DOWN THE CHUTE.** If a jam occurs, use a broom stick or device provided with the blower designed to clear out the snow in the chute. Try not to get the stick too close to the impeller when clearing the snow from the chute. If the impeller catches the stick, injury to the wrist can occur from whiplash.



Please share this information with family and friends.

Be safe and enjoy the winter season!

