

# THE SCOOP ON SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

Now that the winter season is upon us, take time to review these safety tips to help make clearing snow and ice injury-free.

## GET A HANDLE ON SNOW BLOWING

Snow blowers can be fun when compared to shovels, but they can also be dangerous when not used properly. Follow these precautions when using a blower to remove snow from your sidewalk or driveway:

- Be sure to read the manufacturer's manual prior to using the snow blower.
- Before you start, check the area you're clearing to be sure it's free of debris that could get picked up and hurled by the blower. You should never use a snow blower on a gravel driveway for this reason.
- Make sure no one is in the dangerous discharge area.
- Never leave a machine running unattended.
- Dress appropriately with warm clothing, sturdy boots and hearing protection. Avoid loose items like scarves that could get caught.
- Protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning; always start and run gasoline-powered snow blowers outside.
- If a clog occurs:
  - Never put your hand in the intake or discharge chute.
  - Turn the engine off and wait at least five seconds for the blades to stop rotating.
  - Use a long stick or broom handle (never your hand) to clear the clog.

## SNOW SHOVELING: LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Shoveling snow, although often thought of as a fun winter activity, can be a strenuous endeavor, especially after a heavy snowfall or if the snow is wet and heavy. To clear a driveway and/or sidewalk safely, follow these tips:

- Individuals over 40 years old who are relatively inactive and those with a history of heart problems should consult a doctor before shoveling snow.
- Do not smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol while shoveling, as this puts extra stress on your heart.
- Dress warmly and protect extremities, such as your nose, ears, hands and feet.
- Pick the right shovel for you. Plastic shovels with smaller blades weigh less and will be easier to lift.
- When shoveling, lift with your legs bent and back straight, "sitting" into the movement. By doing this, you will keep your spine upright and under less stress.

## CLEAR ICE WITH EASE

When it comes to removing ice, there are ways to make it easier on yourself and help prevent injury.

- If you have time on your side, wait until late afternoon to tackle the ice, as the warmer weather during the day can make ice soft and easier to shovel or chip away.
- To make future ice easier to remove, you can spread sand on your sidewalk or driveway before the ice forms; this trick also makes icy patches safer for pedestrians.