



Snow Removal Safety Tips

Snow shoveling combines heavy lifting and cold weather, resulting in possible injuries to the back and shoulder muscles if the proper precautions are not taken.

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, more than 118,000 people were treated for injuries sustained while shoveling or manually removing snow in 2007. In that same year, 15,000 were injured using snow blowers – three times as many snow blower injuries than the previous year. Types of injuries can include sprains and strains, particularly in the back and shoulders, as well as lacerations and amputations.

Tips to prevent injuries while shoveling and using a snow blower:

- Check with your doctor. Because this activity places high stress on the heart, speak with your physician first. If you have a medical condition or do not exercise regularly, consider hiring someone to remove the snow.
- Dress appropriately. Light, layered, water-repellent clothing provides both ventilation and insulation. It also is important to wear the appropriate head coverings, as well as mittens or gloves and thick, warm socks. Take a break if you feel yourself getting too hot or too cold.
- See what you are shoveling/snow blowing. Make sure your hat or scarf does not block your vision. Watch for ice patches and uneven surfaces. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots that have slip-resistant soles.
- Clear snow early and often. Begin when a light covering of snow is on the ground to avoid trying to clear packed, heavy snow.

When shoveling:

- Warm up your muscles. Shoveling can be vigorous activity. Before you begin, warm up your muscles for 10 minutes with light exercise.
- Pace yourself. Take frequent breaks and replenish fluids to prevent dehydration. If you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other signs of a heart attack, seek immediate emergency care.
- Use a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength. Do not use a shovel that is too heavy or too long. Consider buying a shovel specially designed to prevent too much stooping. Space your hands on the tool grip to increase your leverage.
- When possible, push the snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, take small amounts of snow, and lift it with your legs: Squat with your legs apart, knees bent and back straight. Lift by straightening your legs, without bending at the waist. Then walk to where you want to dump the snow; holding a shovel of snow with your arms outstretched puts too much weight on your spine.
- Do not throw the snow over your shoulder or to the side. This requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.

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Loss Control Safety Techniques



Snow Removal Safety Tips (continued)

When snow blowing:

- Never stick your hands or feet in the snow blower. If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait at least five seconds before using a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the motor and blades' recoil after the machine has been turned off.
- Do not leave the snow blower unattended when it is running. Shut off the engine if you must walk away from the machine.
- Watch the snow blower cord. If you are operating an electric snow blower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times, so you do not trip and fall.
- Add fuel before starting the snow blower. Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- Read the instruction manual. Prior to using a snow blower, read the instruction manual for specific safety hazards, unfamiliar features, and whenever attempting to repair or maintain the snow blower.

Proper snow removal is no accident. Be safe. Take note of the topics and recommendations discussed in this bulletin. We encourage you to put them into practice – doing so helps ensure your safety. It is the philosophy of Frankenmuth Insurance and your Independent Insurance Agent to provide services that give policyholders peace of mind. At Frankenmuth Insurance, we truly are *with you all the way*.

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