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RESOURCES

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration - Winter Weather](#)

[California Code of Regulations Title 8 Section 5098](#)

QUESTIONS

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Snow Removal Equipment

by Scarlett Sadler

Many agencies are responsible for clearing snow from their property, and while this might be a task that is done with a shovel, it is likely most agencies will be using some sort of powered equipment like an electric snow blower, various stage snow blower, or tractor with a snow blower attachment. Regardless of what type of snow removal equipment is being used, all equipment requires basic maintenance along with being aware of the basic safety recommendations when operating.

Before setting out to utilize snow removal equipment, we suggest being familiar with the following basic maintenance, operations, and safety recommendations:

Equipment Maintenance:

- Operators should familiarize themselves with the equipment's owner's manual and become familiar with all the parts, uses, and recommended maintenance.
- All equipment should be inspected prior to use to ensure the equipment is in good working order to include:
 - Check the fluids, change the oil, and replace or change the fuel. Ideally, fresh fuel should be used at the start of the season and removed when not in use.
 - Inspect belts, hoses, shave plates, paddles, tires, scraper plates, skid shoes, shear pins, cables, auger, batteries, and any other parts on your equipment model. If something is worn or damaged, do not operate the equipment until it is repaired.
- If applicable, always thoroughly clean the chute, impeller, and auger to prevent snow from freezing and damaging equipment before storing.

Equipment Operation:

- Ensure the path traveled with snow removal equipment is clear of any debris to prevent running over objects that could damage the equipment, injure the operator or nearby persons, or even damage the surrounding property.
- Adjust runners or skid shoes to ensure the scraper blade is at the appropriate height for the surface being cleared.
- Snow removal should occur frequently to prevent snow accumulation. The longer the snow accumulates, the harder the snow removal process will be, especially if the snow melts and refreezes or is walked on or driven on.
- If applicable, install chains prior to starting snow removal.
- Only operate the equipment in conditions of good visibility and ample light. Falling snow, fog, and similar conditions can impair vision.
- Use caution when clearing paths near slopes or hills and changing directions. Keep movements slow and gradual.
- Avoid directing discharge towards persons or property.
- Never leave any running equipment unattended. Always turn off the engine and remove the key if applicable.
- Do not operate equipment on uneven or rough terrain. Exercise extra caution near drop-offs, ditches, or embankments, as units may overturn if a wheel is over the edge.
- Do not overload the equipment capacity by attempting to clear snow too rapidly.
- Agencies should consider conducting snow removal activities during non-business hours or scheduled breaks to ensure safe walking surfaces for employees and the public.
- Never clear a clog when the equipment is on. Ensure that all moving parts have come to a complete stop before attempting to clear any clogs or debris.
 - Avoid using hands to remove materials, even after turning off the engine. Fingers have been amputated when the blade unexpectedly rotated. Instead, use a small shovel, tool, or stick for safe material removal.



Operator Safety:

- An operator should wear protective eyewear, and if the noise level of the equipment is exactly or more than 85 decibels, hearing protection should also be used.
- Agencies should consider implementing policies that address the use of medication, drugs, and

RISK SIMPLIFIED

alcohol while operating snow removal equipment to prevent employee injuries resulting from impairment.

- Equipment operators should avoid wearing loose clothing, scarves, jewelry, or any items that could become tangled in rotating parts. Any loose hair should be pinned back.
- Exercise caution when working in cold conditions to prevent cold-related injuries such as hypothermia and frostbite. Wear appropriate winter outer garments that ensure operator warmth and visibility.
- Equipment operators should wear insulated, waterproof footwear with good traction to ensure stability and protection from the cold and slippery conditions. Slip-resistant footwear is essential for preventing accidents and maintaining safety during snow removal operations.



Incorporating these best practices for snow removal ensures the optimal functioning of equipment, minimizes risks, and contributes to the overall safety of operators, bystanders, and the surrounding environment. For questions regarding snow removal equipment, contact [Risk Control](#).