

Snow Blower Injuries Can Be Prevented

It's estimated that human error, not equipment failure, accounts for more than 90% of all acute hand injuries. However, when it comes to snow blower injuries...the percentage jumps to almost 100%.

"Many hand injuries arising from snow blowers are catastrophic. Frequently, there is full or partial loss of fingers, violent tissue disruption, fractures, and complex tendon injuries," states Iowa Ortho Hand Surgeon, Ze-Hui Han, M.D. "Last year we received excessive amounts of snow and as a result we saw more snow blower related injuries. The majority of these injuries occur when the auger becomes clogged and people use their hand to try and remove the snow. Complicating this scenario even further is the fact that it's usually the dominant hand that is injured," adds Dr. Han.

Many people are not aware that even when the engine is shut off, the blade is still wound up and once the clog is cleared it will give one final rotation. Larger snow blowers have two blades, including one that is not visible. Since it can't be seen, the second blade causes a large number of injuries. Additionally, there's a lag time after the switch is shut off and when the blade actually stops rotating. Hundreds of snow blower injuries could be prevented each year by knowing the above facts.

Unfortunately, snow blowers can cause extensive injury to multiple areas of the hand. "Recovery from these injuries can be difficult requiring reconstructive surgery, wound care, and rehabilitation," states Iowa Ortho Hand Surgeon, Benjamin Paulson, M.D. "Emergent care is crucial. If there is amputation of fingers, they should be retained and brought with the patient. The more rapidly the assessment is performed and the extent of injury determined, the swifter medical intervention can be started to retain the integrity of the injured area. This is key in providing the patient with the best opportunity for restored function," says Dr. Paulson.

Traumatic injuries are serious. Call the experts you can trust at Iowa Ortho. One of our Iowa Ortho hand surgeons is available 24/7. At Iowa Ortho we're returning people to their *everyday* lives...*every day*.