



Your Yard

Tune-up Tips For Your Lawn And Garden Equipment

(NAPSA)—Before you get out your mower, trimmer, blower, chain saw or pruner this season, there are a few steps and safety procedures you should review.

First, preparing your cold-weather outdoor power equipment for storage is important, says Kris Kiser, president and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI).

“Your snowblower may have worked hard all winter, so it’s time to give it a good cleaning,” said Kiser. “Remove any dirt or debris. Drain the fuel tank, and cover your snowblower so it is protected from dirt and debris. Store your equipment in a safe place where it won’t be exposed to corrosive chemicals or moisture.”

Next, make sure the engine in any equipment is in good working order. Here are tips to help:

- **Check the fuel tank.** Fuel left in the tank over the winter months should be drained or it could damage your equipment. Most fuel contains some level of ethanol, which contains corrosive alcohol and can phase separate. Drain the tank responsibly and put in fresh fuel that contains 10 percent or less ethanol (E10 or less). Dispose of old fuel properly.

- **Inspect your equipment.** Check for loose belts and missing or damaged parts. Examine all cables, brakes and wheels for signs of wear and damage. Make sure no safety features or guards have been disabled or removed. If you find anything concerning, replace the parts or take your equipment to a qualified service representative.



An annual tune-up can extend the life of your outdoor power equipment so it runs better and uses fuel more efficiently.

- **Replace old oil.** Run the engine for a few minutes to warm up existing oil so it will drain more easily. Stop the engine, remove the drain plug and empty the old oil (tilt the mower back to get it all out, if necessary). Replace the plug and refill the engine with oil recommended by the product manufacturer. Properly dispose of the drained oil.

- **Install clean air filters.** Engines and equipment run much better with clean filters. Paper filters need to be replaced. Some foam filters can be cleaned and put back in.

- **Change the spark plug.** Pull off the spark plug wire and remove the old plug with a socket or spark plug wrench. Install the new plug, being careful not to overtighten it, which could prevent the mower from starting.

- **Examine and sharpen your cutting blade.** Have your lawn mower’s cutting blade sharpened so you can get a clean cut on your lawn and not tear the grass. Sharper blades mean your lawn will be healthier and your lawn

mower will operate more efficiently. Replace nicked or broken blades, which can come from hitting rocks or other debris.

- **Check the undercarriage.** Always disconnect the spark plug before working around the underside of your mower. Use a wire brush to scrape any old grass clippings or dirt sticking to the underside of equipment.

- **Clean the equipment.** Dirt, oil and grass can stick to equipment. Give everything a good cleaning so the machines can run more efficiently and last longer.

- **Fuel equipment with E10 or less.** Don’t use gasoline with more than 10 percent ethanol (E10) in outdoor power equipment. Some gas stations may offer E15 or other fuel blends, but this higher-ethanol fuel is dangerous—and is in fact illegal—to use in any small-engine equipment, such as lawn mowers, chain saws, generators, and other lawn and garden equipment not designed for higher-ethanol blends.

- **Store fuel properly.** Label fuel storage cans with the purchase date of fuel. Never leave fuel that is more than 30 days old in outdoor power equipment.

- **Review the instruction manual.** Read the operator’s manual and refamiliarize yourself with the controls and what they do on the equipment. Make sure you know how to stop the machine quickly if needed.

Learn More

For lots of other safety tips, go to www.opei.org. For further information on proper fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com.