

TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

Get your snow thrower ready for winter

Simple maintenance can keep your snow thrower running strong.

Last winter you probably only needed to use your snow thrower once – maybe not even at all.

If you filled your fuel tank at that time or at the beginning of the season and haven't thought about it since, you may be in for an unpleasant surprise when you want to use it again.

Unless you used a fuel stabilizer that is specifically formulated to deal with the ethanol in today's gasoline, or drained the fuel tank and carburetor completely, your snow thrower may not start when you need it this winter. Today's gasoline tends to go stale fairly quickly.

To check your machine out and get it ready for winter, you can follow these simple steps:

If you have fuel in your snow thrower fuel tank, you can try to start the engine. If it starts, you're in luck. Now shut off the engine and remove the fuel from the fuel tank with a siphon or a turkey baster. Then restart the engine and let it run until it stalls from lack of fuel. The reason for this is that while the engine started on this old fuel today, it will most likely not work in a month or so when the temperature is close to freezing.

Next, we recommend buying a can of ethanol-free fuel. At H.D. Reynolds, we carry a product made by VP Fuel that comes in cans as

small as a quart. The benefit of this fuel is that it has a two year shelf life. Put a pint or two into your gas tank and start the engine. Let it run for a couple of minutes to flush out the fuel system and then shut off the engine. Now you are ready for snow. Even if you don't need your snow thrower until next season, it should still start with no problems.

What if it doesn't start?

If your snow thrower will not start on the fuel currently in the tank, then remove the old fuel with a siphon or a turkey baster.

Again, we recommend buying a can of ethanol free fuel like VP Fuel. Put a half pint or so into your snow thrower and press the primer several times. Then try to start the engine. (Tip: If your snow thrower has an electric starter, use it. It will turn the engine over faster and more continuously than you can with the rope starter. Engines that have been stored with fuel in them tend to start harder if they haven't been run in a while.) If it starts, let it run for 10 minutes or so to flush out the carburetor and fuel lines and to distribute the ethanol free fuel throughout the fuel system.

At this point you're ready for winter. Even if you don't need to use your snow thrower for several months,

the VP fuel should ensure that it starts easily.

Still no luck?

If your snow thrower still will not start, it most likely needs to have the carburetor cleaned. If you are not comfortable doing this yourself, you can call us to schedule your machine for service.

Unless there is a snow storm sooner, we recommend waiting until mid-November to purchase fuel from the gas pump for your snow thrower. Even then, it's best not to put it into the gas tank until you are ready to use your machine. First pick up some fuel stabilizer that is formulated to deal with ethanol. (We sell a product called Ethanol Shield that works very well.)

When you get ready to buy fuel, put the appropriate amount of stabilizer in your gas can and then pump the fuel in after it. This will mix it in thoroughly. We recommend buying either 89 or 93 octane (mid-grade or premium), and only as much as you need to carry you through the next 30 days or so. By adding the stabilizer when you purchase the gas, you slow down the deterioration process when the gas is at its freshest and you ensure that there will only be stabilized fuel in your snow thrower. After all, you never know how long it will stand idle before the next storm.

The old saying "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is certainly true here. Better to take care of this now so that your snow thrower is ready when you need it for that first snowstorm.

If you have any questions about snow thrower maintenance, feel free to call us at 413-743-9512.

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