Are You Ready For The Snow?

Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow! Those are the lyrics to a classic song written in 1945 and sung by so many famous singers. Well, along with the snow comes the clean up. Whether you use a shovel or a snow blower, there are precautions you need to take for your safety.

Every winter people get hurt shoveling, ranging from strained muscles to fatal heart attacks. Shoveling is not just an annoying chore; it puts serious stress on your body. It causes a quick increase to your heart rate and blood pressure, often times leading to a heart attack. Everyone is at risk, but those at greatest risk are people who have had a heart attack or heart disease, those who have high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol, smokers and anyone who leads a sedentary lifestyle.

Here are some safety tips for shoveling snow:

- Use a small shovel
- Do not try to throw snow long distances, push snow when you can
- Do not shovel right after eating or while smoking
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Bend at the knees and not at the back
- Begin shoveling slow, pace yourself and take frequent breaks
- Dress in layers--remembering to cover ears, hands and feet
- Listen to your body: if you are out of breath, take a break; if you feel chest tightness or pain, STOP IMMEDIATELY.

Shoveling is a vigorous activity even for healthy, younger people, so take it easy and listen to your body.

A snow blower can be a useful tool in the winter but it also has dangers involved with it. Each year hundreds of people are injured by improper use of snow blowers. Most injuries involve the hand or fingers and include amputations. The cause is often a clogged auger or discharge chute.

Here are some safety tips that apply to most snow blowers:

- TURN IT OFF! Make sure to unplug electric models
- THINK before you act!
- Disengage clutch
- Wait five minutes for the impeller blades to stop rotating (take a break)
- Always use a stick or broom handle to clear snow
- NEVER put your hand in the chute or around the blades
- DO NOT REMOVE the safety devices from the machine

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Other general safety tips:

- **DO NOT** drink alcohol before snow blowing
- Do not wear loose fitting clothing
- Wear shoes/boots with good traction
- Beware of carbon monoxide--start and run snow blowers outside not in buildings
- Never put your face in front of the discharge chute and never point it towards other people

When the snow comes, and we know it will, following these tips can keep you safe this winter season. Err on the side of caution!

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