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8 tips to get snowblowers ready for storage



Jeff Cook, QUAD-CITY TIMES

Twyla Lopez blows snow off a sidewalk in downtown Davenport on Feb. 17.

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While it seems this winter is never-ending, the snow has to stop sometime. And then it will be time to put away the snowblower. But to extend its life and help ensure that it will start next season, a few maintenance steps are in order.

Here are eight tips from RepairClinic.com, an online store for replacement parts for home appliances, outdoor power equipment, and heating and cooling equipment.

1. Replace the spark plug.

The tiny but mighty spark plug should be replaced at least once per season, even if it appears to be working fine. Over time, a spark plug's performance will degrade due to carbon buildup and a weakened electrode. This dramatically increases emissions, reduces engine performance and increases fuel consumption.

2. Drain and replace the oil.

Before replacing engine oil, check your owner's manual for the recommended way to tilt the snowblower. It varies from model to model. Unscrew the drain plug and release the oil into a bucket. Replace the plug and add fresh oil, as recommended by the manufacturer.

Used oil should be recycled. Most small engine repair shops have a free recycling program for this.

3. Add fuel stabilizer to fresh fuel.

Fuel stabilizer slows buildup in the carburetor. Follow the owner's manual for instructions on leaving fuel in the engine during storage, as this varies by manufacturer.

If you drain the fuel, then you will need to put in fresh next winter. Some people have gotten into the habit of draining the fuel because, in some models, the gaskets in the carburetor would be eaten away over the summer if the fuel was left in. Then the gaskets would have to be replaced.

In addition, fuel left sitting over the off season slowly evaporates, leaving a kind of "varnish" build up in the carburetors.

4. Degrease.

Spray a degreaser on greasy and dirty areas. Allow the degreaser to sit for 10-15 minutes before wiping with a clean cloth.

5. Check the fuel cap and tires.

Fuel caps have small vent holes to allow air into the fuel tank. Replace the fuel cap if its air vent holes are blocked by buildup or debris. Cover or close the fuel cap vents. Check the tires for wear and replace as needed. For pneumatic tires, a tire pressure gauge should be used to check the air pressure.

6. Lubricate bearings.

Lubricate wheel bearings, auger bearings and the impeller bearings.

7. Inspect the scraper blade, slide shoes and other parts for wear.

Thoroughly check the scraper blade and slide shoes (aka skid shoes) for wear. These parts have the important job of protecting the housing from damage. Replace these parts if they have worn dangerously thin or are damaged beyond repair.

8. Store in a cool, dry place.

Cover the snowblower to prevent dust and debris from entering the unit.

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