

The Service Department

PREPARING MOTORIZED EQUIPMENT FOR THE COMING SEASON

We welcome Allan Gray as a contributing editor. He will be discussing equipment and its maintenance. Allan is recently retired from the University of Guelph after 15 years as a mechanic. He spent 23 years with General Motors and taught courses in mechanics at Conestoga College for 7 years.

Some of these suggestions should have been done when the machines were put in storage at the end of last season; however due to the timing of this article, we will start as if they were not performed.

1. Begin with a circle check of your machine to see if anything is missing, bent, or out-of-order.

2. Next comes the most important matter in restoring the machine to proper operating condition. Wash and clean the top and underneath thoroughly. The more you clean, the more you will save in maintenance costs. Improper cleaning can lead to a snowballing of negative effects. When grass, weeds, and mixtures of soil are left on parts close to shafts and bearings, the sooner rust will appear. When this rust is left near bearing seals, it will probably progress past the seal and into the bearing. When the seal is ruined, moisture and air will dry up the lubricant in the bearing causing it to seize up and create a great deal of noise and vibration. This could cause things to go out of alignment. Consequently, the machine will not perform properly.

After equipment has been washed, it should have a light spray of oil, especially under cutting areas. This is especially important when the equipment will not be used for a long time. A light spray of oil will keep your lawn equipment, etc. looking like new. Greasing after washing will force water from bearings which will prevent rust.

3. Test the battery for water and charged condition. Remove negative battery cable (-) first. Then remove the positive cable (+). This will reduce the chance of shorting out cables and causing fire or injury. Clean battery terminals and cables with the proper tool or coarse sandpaper. After this is accomplished, install cables on battery, starting with positive (+) and then the negative (-) cable. This would be a good time to charge the battery. It should be charged slowly for half an hour to prevent sulfating (going bad). It is now ready to be used again when needed.

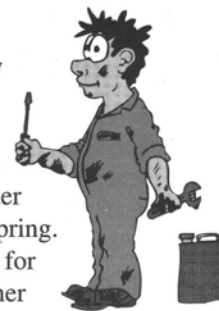
4. Next on your list should be to change the oil in the crankcase of the engine. It is preferable to change the oil when the engine is warm. You should also change all filters, including the oil, gas, and hydraulic filters, as well as the water filters, if water and antifreeze are used for cooling. The hydraulic oil doesn't need to be changed, but the filters must be changed at proper intervals (check your service manual). Install proper engine oil and filter (check service manual). Do not overfill.

5. Check air filters and replace if light cannot be seen through them. Use a trouble light to check for plugged conditions. Clean or replace spark plugs if it is a gasoline or propane engine. A diesel engine uses no plugs, but filters and fuel must be kept extremely clean and free from moisture.

6. Check and test drive belts. If drive surface is shiny, hard, and brittle, replace belts.

7. After sitting for long periods, particularly over winter, fuels should be changed, including mixed gases. Gas fuel can be drained in the autumn. Run the engine to use the last gas in the system. Fill with a medium gas which has a higher octane and will mean less pulling to start in the spring.

8. Finally, test all brakes and safety switches for proper operation and you are on the way to another satisfying season working outdoors. ♦



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J. Robert Dippel

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