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Outdoor power equipment: Know your machine, review safety procedures, follow manufacturer's guidance

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - Spring is here and as we get out our lawn mowers and other outdoor power equipment out from storage to work in our yards, businesses, and other green spaces, it's important to keep safety in mind. "Think safety first," says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), an international trade association representing outdoor power equipment, small engine, utility vehicle, golf car and personal transport vehicle manufacturers and suppliers. "I can't stress enough to review manufacturer's safety guidance before starting up any equipment—especially your lawn mower.

Review your owner's manual and do maintenance on your equipment," said Kiser.

OPEI offers these tips for readying and using your outdoor power equipment:

- Know not all lawn mowers are the same. Whether your mower is a garden tractor, zero turn mower or other, it has a unique design, requirements, weight classification, and other differences that impact how to use it safely. The newest machines have the latest safety standards.

- Know your specific machine. Many mowers may look similar, but the technology is ever evolving with evolving safety systems. They vary in design, power supply, performance, operating parameters, and more. Your manufacturer-supplied owner's manual will guide you in these differences. Read your owner's manual.

- When using mowers on slopes follow the manufacturer's guidance to the letter.

- Do not disable or alter manufacturer-installed safety

equipment.

- Walk your yard before mowing. Slopes, wet grass, and weather may impact equipment performance, as well as safe handling procedures. Pick up sticks and limbs that may have fallen to the ground over the winter and any loose objects that could be hit by a mower. Inspect trees for damaged limbs that may get in your way when mowing.

- Look over equipment before use. Check the air filter, oil level and gasoline tank. Watch for loose belts and missing or damaged parts. Replace any parts needed or take your equipment to a qualified service representative.

- Protect your power. Use only E10 or less fuel in gasoline-powered outdoor power equipment if it is not designed for higher ethanol blends. Add a fuel stabilizer if you don't use up all the fuel in the tank right away. Burn off any fuel before storing the mower for more than 30 days. For battery-powered equipment,

only use battery packs specified by the manufacturer. Follow all charging instructions as outlined in the owner's manual. Be sure to store fuel and batteries safely. Keep batteries away from other metal objects, store them in a climate-controlled area, and never stack batteries.

- Keep children and pets away from machines during operation.

- Keep your mower clean. It will run more efficiently and last longer. Always remove dirt, oil, or grass before using and storing. Store equipment in a dry place, avoiding damp or wet environments. For information on safe fueling, go to www.LookBeforeYouPump.com. For more safety information visit www.opei.org

About OPEI

OPEI is an international trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of outdoor power equipment, small engines, battery power systems, portable generators, utility and personal transport

vehicles, and golf cars. OPEI is the advocacy voice of the industry, and a recognized Standards Development Organization for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and active internationally through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in the development of safety and performance standards. OPEI owns Equip Exposition, the international landscape, outdoor living, and equipment exposition, and administers the TurfMutt Foundation, which directs the environmental education program, TurfMutt. OPEI-Canada represents members on a host of issues, including recycling, emissions, and other regulatory developments across the Canadian provinces. Media contacts

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STATEPOINT - It may feel like warm weather is still a ways off, but you should already be getting your lawn and garden spring-ready, according to experts. "One thing I don't think people realize is that to get your grass, shrubs and other plants looking good in the spring... all that preparation starts right now," says Major League Fishing bass pro, Brian Latimer, or "Blat" as he is known by fans. To help homeowners prep for spring, Latimer has partnered with lawn care equipment manufacturer, Exmark, to offer his four, go-to tips:

1. Pull Those Weeds. According to Latimer, the most important step in prepping your lawn and garden for spring is weeding. "I have a zero-toler-

ance policy when it comes to weeds," he says. "Watch those sneaky weeds growing in your shrubs and ground covers, because those are going to be the first ones that show their heads in the spring."

While weeding isn't the most fun you can have in your yard, it's worth the effort. Latimer also recommends putting a pre-emergent out now while cool-season weeds germinate. This is especially important if you have warm-season grass. While you can use pre-emergent on your planting beds as well, he recommends hand-pulling them if you can.

2. Tidy up with Selective Pruning. Pruning will make your shrubs look nice and tidy; however, Latimer recommends being careful in your efforts, avoiding plants that are bud-

ding. Pruning buds will keep your flowers from being as prolific in the springtime. You can check for buds by combing your hands through the foliage.

3. Get Rid of Pests. Certain spring pests should be treated for in the colder months. Latimer is especially wary of fire ants, as they're one of the most active lawn pests in spring. Treating them early will minimize their activity and mitigate potential problems they cause when the weather warms up. "I can promise you they are going to be everywhere in warm weather, so treat them now," he says.

4. Get Those Leaves up. Latimer knows that leaf blowing or raking is time-consuming, but he says that getting fallen leaves off the ground is essential. Not only are leaves

on your lawn an eyesore, but they can also keep a lot of excess moisture from winter rain, snow and ice stuck in your soil. This creates the potential for root rot, active pests, and germinating weeds. Latimer offers more insights in "4 Tips to Prep Your Backyard for Spring," a recent video from Exmark. To watch the video, visit Backyard Life, which is part of a unique multimedia destination with a focus on helping homeowners make the most of outdoor spaces. There you can also download additional tips and view other Exmark videos.

There's no time like the present to plan for the future. With these great tips in mind, it's time to brave the brisk weather and get your lawn and garden prepped for spring.



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Practice being a "Master Backyarder" this Earth Day

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA - The TurfMutt Foundation, which advocates for the care and use of our backyards, community parks, and other green spaces, says Earth Day (April 22) is the perfect time to practice being a master backyarder. "Backyarding" is the act of taking activities that we normally do inside, out to our yards and parks. Master backyarders el-

evate back yarding, using their personal and community green space for everything from working and exercising to entertaining and relaxing.

"Master backyarders also understand the benefits of our yards and other community green spaces to the environment," explains Kris Kiser, president, and CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation. "Every day is Earth

Day for master backyarders. They plant for pollinators, know to put the right plant in the right place, and recognize their backyard as an important part of the connected ecosystem."

This year, the TurfMutt Foundation encourages everyone to use Earth Day as an opportunity to practice being a

SEE BACKYARDER ON PAGE A3

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HOME & GARDEN & CAR

4 misconceptions homeowners have about floods

STATEPOINT - Many people look forward to spring when the weather warms up and flowers start to bloom, but it also marks the start of the peak time of year for flash flooding in the United States. According to NOAA, 75% of flash floods happen between late April and mid-September. And while you may not want to think about it, when water backs up and overflows, it generally goes where it doesn't belong and can cause serious damage to your home.

Unfortunately, many homeowners have misconceptions about floods, leaving them unprepared. Here are four of the biggest myths:

1. Homeowners insurance policies cover flood damage. A typical homeowners policy covers water damage from a sink or bathtub overflowing but won't help with flood damage caused by storms – something many homeowners only discover after it's too late. However, some insurance companies offer coverage to help fill the gaps, so you don't have to pay out of pocket for repairs and replacements. For example, Erie Insurance now offers Extended Water coverage, which covers dam-



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) designer491 / iStock via Getty Images Plus
FEMA says floodwater only needs to get a mere 3 inches high to make it likely that you'd need to replace drywall and baseboards.

age caused not only by natural disasters, but also by sewer and drain backups.

2. Only people who live in flood plains need flood insurance. A national survey commissioned by Erie Insurance found that 53% of homeowners think only people who live in high-risk flood zones should buy flood insurance. However, 25% of flood claims are filed by people who live outside those areas. Additionally, FEMA says floodwater only needs to get a mere 3 inches high to make it

likely that you'd need to replace drywall and baseboards.

3. There's nothing you can do to prevent flood damage. Nothing is foolproof, but there are ways to protect your home from water damage. Install a sump pump along with a battery backup and regularly test it. Improve drainage around your home by clearing leaves and debris from gutters, storm drains and downspouts. You can also install water sensors to alert you of water or leaks within your home. If a storm is

on the way, plan ahead by placing valuables and sentimental items into plastic storage bins, moving items off the floor (especially if they are stored in basements and lower levels of a home) and by making a home inventory. A list of all your personal possessions, along with their estimated values, will help if you need to file an insurance claim.

4. Insurance can only help you after an incident. Many homeowners don't realize they may be able to get reimbursed for taking steps to protect their homes when flooding is imminent. As one example, under certain circumstances Erie Insurance will reimburse homeowners up to \$10,000 for materials such as sandbags and the sand to fill them, fill for temporary levees, pumps or plastic sheeting and lumber used with these items, as well as labor. "We encourage homeowners to not underestimate the risk of flooding, and to be aware of the significant amount of damage that even a small amount of water can cause," said Michelle Tenant, vice president of product management, Erie Insurance. "Talk to your inde-

pendent insurance agent about your home and your neighborhood to make sure you have the coverage that's right for you." To learn more about protecting your home from floods, visit erieinsurance.com/extended-water.

Life is unpredictable. So is weather. But one thing is certain: if it can rain (or snow), it can flood. Make sure you're protected with the right type of insurance.



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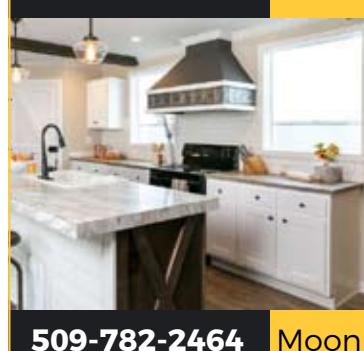
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Spring cleaning: Don't toss that 'Junk,' It may be valuable!

STATEPOINT - It's time to hit the garage, basement, attic, and closets for that age-old task of spring cleaning! Before hauling unwanted possessions to the curb, you may be surprised to learn they might be valuable -- especially if you have sports cards and memorabilia gathering dust.

With prices of sports cards rising in recent years, take time to determine if yours are valuable and how to best sell them.

"Older sports cards and memorabilia aren't just highly collectible; they can be worth lots of money. Recent sales

of scarce vintage cards have topped anywhere from thousands of dollars to tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands. "And really rare cards can go higher," says Al Crisafulli, Auction Director at Love of the Game Auctions, an internet sports auction house that helps families identify and sell valuable items. Crisafulli has assisted people in selling such keepsakes as a grandparent's autograph collection and an uncle's childhood baseball cards, for tens of thousands of dollars. In one life-changing event, he helped a family determine

that a baseball bat that spent decades protecting their home was used by Hall of Famer Lou Gehrig -- and Love of the Game Auctions sold it for almost half a million dollars. Today, that bat could bring more than a million dollars.

The key is understanding what makes old sports collectibles valuable. To help, Crisafulli is sharing some tips:

Older is Usually Pricier

Cards from the 1960s and earlier are collectible, and those from before the 1940s can be worth a lot of money, especially those depicting stars. Do you have cards of

Hall of Famers, such as Mickey Mantle, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner or Ty Cobb? Even non-stars from the early days of a sport can be worth big bucks, especially if the cards have no creases and retain sharp corners and original gloss. If you have very old cards from the 1880s through the 1930s, look for tobacco, gum, and candy brands, such as Old Judge, Piedmont, Sweet Caporal, Goudy or American Caramel. If you want to sell sports items for the most money, consider a specialty auction, such as

SEE JUNK ON PAGE A4



Courtesy TurfMutt Foundation
Kris Kiser, president, and CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation pup Mulligan.

resource at the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools, the U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Green Apple, the Center for Green Schools, the Outdoors Alliance for Kids, the National Energy Education Development (NEED) project, Climate Change Live, Petfinder and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 2017, the TurfMutt animated video series won the coveted Cygnosis Kids Imagination Award for Best Interstitial Series. TurfMutt's personal, home habitat was featured in the 2017-2020 Wildlife Habitat Council calendars. More information at TurfMutt.com. Media contacts: Ami Neiberger, Four Leaf PR on behalf of OPEI, 703-887-4877, ami@fourleafpr.com; Debbi Mayster, Four Leaf PR on behalf of OPEI, 240-988-6243, debbi@fourleafpr.com

yarding benefits include lower stress, increased happiness, and improved memory. For the health of the planet, green space captures carbon, produces oxygen, and prevents runoff.

• Watch Lucky Dog on CBS for inspiration. Master backyarders aren't too proud to take their back yarding cues from their furry friends. After all, no one loves and appreciates yards and green spaces more than dogs. Master backyarders select plants that will thrive in their climate zone and work to create a backyard that supports their family's lifestyle. To learn more about selecting the right plants for your yard, refer to the USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

• Plant with pollinators in mind. Master backyarders understand that our yards and community parks are an important part of the connected ecosystem, providing food and shelter for pollinators. They plant with birds, bees, butterflies, bats, and other creatures in mind.

• Water wisely. After getting their new plants started, master backyarders only water when necessary. They install watering solutions – like smart controllers on irrigation systems – to help use water efficiently while maintaining a living landscape. They remember that over-watered grass gets lazy, growing roots in a horizontal pattern. But with less water, grass sends its roots deeper – vertically – seeking water. By working harder, grass does a better job performing its environmental superpowers like sequestering carbon and releasing oxygen.

• Bone up on backyard benefits. Master backyarders are tuned into the many benefits of spending time in backyards and community parks, and they use the outdoors for all sorts of activities like dining, entertaining, working and even vacationing. For humans, back



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Research shows new car safety features can help with crash reduction

STATEPOINT - At a time when highway fatalities are on the rise, new research shows that the widespread adoption of the latest vehicle safety features could mean fewer crashes and safer roads. However, it could be a while before we see the full benefits of these advancements.

"With drivers holding onto their vehicles for 10 years or more, it could take many years before the fleet fully turns over," says Rini Sherony, senior principal engineer, Toyota Collaborative Safety Research Center. But what if every vehicle on the road was fully equipped with crash-prevention features? And how do engineers identify which new vehicle safety features to prioritize next? To find out, Toyota Collaborative Safety Research Center and Virginia Tech teamed up to research the potential benefits that different safety systems have in various crash scenarios.

JUNK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A3

Love of the Game, which has the expertise to properly research sports ephemera and maintains bidder lists of collectors specializing in sports. More information is available at loveofthegameauctions.com.

ny, senior principal engineer, Toyota Collaborative Safety Research Center. But what if every vehicle on the road was fully equipped with crash-prevention features? And how do engineers identify which new vehicle safety features to prioritize next? To find out, Toyota Collaborative Safety Research Center and Virginia Tech teamed up to research the potential benefits that different safety systems have in various crash scenarios.

The team took real-world crashes and reconstructed the data, performing multiple crash simulations. They started modeling with more traditional "passive" safety features, like the latest vehicle structures, and extended their work to include such technologies as automatic emergency braking, lane-keeping assistance, blind-spot warning, etc. Assuming full deployment and optimal activation of safety features, such as those that

were modeled, their research showed that over half of all U.S. crashes could be avoided and nearly 60% of moderate to serious injuries could be mitigated. At the same time, the research also identified what types of crashes are likely to still occur even if these safety features were deployed. The research center has made the study's data, found at toyota.com/CSRC, publicly available so that automakers, policymakers, technology research uni-

versities and tech companies can work together to continue to make safety gains and fill the crash prevention gap.

"While drivers can't avoid every danger on the road, our research shows that safety systems have the potential to be very effective in reducing the risk and severity of crashes," says Sherony. "It's important to know that most automakers offer features like lane departure warning, automatic emergency braking, audio

warnings and steering assist (often with additional functionality). When you search for your next car, consider these features, even possibly opting for those that do not come standard-equipped. We hope that as drivers continue to adopt and use such technologies, we will be able to realize more of the accident mitigation and prevention benefits that they can offer, resulting in safer roads for everybody."

Postcards, Photographs

We all have keepsakes of vacation destinations, but most aren't valuable. However, photographs and postcards depicting sports stars and ballparks can be significant. Look for early "real photo" postcards from the 1900s through the 1940s, which are photographs printed on post-

card backs.

As with sports cards, star power matters, so preserve those Babe Ruths as opposed to images of your great grandma's baby cousin once removed. And when it comes to photos, look for old markings on the back, such as photographer, publication, and date stamps.

Memorabilia

Set aside old advertising posters depicting sports stars and food, tobacco, or sporting goods brands. Ads from magazines aren't valuable, but those used as store displays and for other marketing purposes can be pricey. Tin signs from the 1960s and earlier can be highly prized,

but reproductions aren't.

Your family's sporting goods, such as balls, gloves, and bats, can be valuable. Pre-1950s uniforms and catcher's masks, helmets and other equipment are highly collected, especially when endorsed by star players. Top condition brings the highest prices, but even used equipment can be

valuable.

"The golden rule is the older the sports card or item, the more valuable it usually is. Pre-1975 pieces start to get interesting and are worth researching," says Crisafulli.

Don't just clean out your "junk" this spring, examine it closely to potentially maximize its value.

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