

Start of Season Equipment Inspections: Why Operator Involvement is Critical

As we kick off a new season, it's critical to ensure all equipment is ready to perform safely and effectively. While winter maintenance plays a major role in repairs and preparation, operator start-of-season inspections are essential for confirming equipment readiness and identifying any remaining or new concerns.

Operators are the first line of defense when it comes to equipment reliability and safety. You know your machines better than anyone. A thorough inspection at the start of the season helps:

- Verify that equipment functions correctly.
- Catch any issues that may have developed over the off-season.
- Ensure past concerns from the fall have been properly addressed.
- Confirm that no safety features have been overlooked during maintenance.



What Should Be Inspected? A complete start-of-season inspection should cover the following:

1. Basic Functionality

- Check all controls, fluid levels, lights, brakes, and steering.
- Test all operating systems for responsiveness and reliability.
- Review calibration and responsiveness of hydraulics and electronics.



2. Follow-Up on Fall Write-Ups

- Review any concerns you noted before the equipment was parked for winter.
- Confirm that repairs were completed.
- If a repair was not made, ask maintenance for a valid reason. Sometimes items are deferred for budget, availability, or safety prioritization—but this should always be communicated.

3. Guarding and Safety Devices

- All guards, shields, safety switches, and alarms must be installed and functioning properly.
- **Do not operate equipment without proper guarding in place—this is a serious safety violation.**

Lock Out / Tag Out (LOTO) Refresher

Even if you're not a mechanic, you may be responsible for locking out equipment if you're making adjustments or minor repairs.

- Review your equipment's specific LOTO procedures.
- Know where and how to isolate energy sources.
- Make sure you have access to proper locks, tags, and documentation.
- If you're unsure, ask your foreman or mechanic before proceeding.



Team Accountability

This process is not just for mechanics or operators—it's a team responsibility:

- Operators: Complete thorough walkarounds and test functionality.
- Foremen: Ensure documentation is complete and verify that safety devices and guards are in place.
- Mechanics: Provide transparency about completed and deferred maintenance, and support the team in understanding any ongoing risks.

Final Reminders

- **Never assume a machine is safe just because it's been serviced over the winter months.**
- Treat the start-of-season inspection as the most important one of the year.
- Report anything unusual immediately—better to delay a job than to risk injury or major equipment failure.

