

May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace, the gladness of Christmas give you hope,
the warmth of Christmas grant you love.



OPEESA'S

Outdoor Power Equipment and Engine Service Association

OPE-IN-THE-KNOW

"The Business of Outdoor Power Equipment"

Volume CLIV, December 28, 2010

Get Current OPE News From the "OPE-In-The-Know" Blog at www.opeintheknow.blogspot.com

- 1) [Toro Reports Fiscal 2010 Full Year Results](#)
- 2) [Kawasaki Denies Any Move to Former Husqvarna Plant](#)
- 3) [Briggs Announces Public Offering of \\$200M of Senior Notes](#)
- 4) [Maker of Snow Throwers Sued Over Exploding Plastic Wheels](#)
- 5) [More Ethanol in Gasoline is Bad News](#)
- 6) [A Christmas Thought From 1513](#)
- 7) [CPSC, Stihl Recall Trimmers/Brushcutters](#)
- 8) [2011 OPE Industry Meeting and Events Calendar](#)
- 9) [Union Votes in Favor of Kohler Contract](#)
- 10) [CPSC, Stihl Recall About 5,000 Chain Saws That May Pose Risk](#)
- 11) [Emak Acquires Majority Shareholding In Ukrainian Company Epicenter Ltd](#)
- 12) [Blizzard Makes Winter Wonderland for Snow Throwers, Ice Melters](#)
- 12) [OPEESA Officers, Board, Executive Director Contact Information](#)

Subscribed-to By Over 660 OPE Industry Leaders in 13 Countries Who Are "In-The-Know"

Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands,
South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States

Want To Receive You Own Copy of "In-The-Know"

Send Your *Name, Title, Company Name, City, State* and *E-Mail Address* To:
opeintheknow@yahoo.com

1) THE TORO COMPANY REPORTS FISCAL 2010 FULL YEAR RESULTS

- *Quarterly sales increased 17 percent; sales for the year grew 11 percent to \$1.7 billion with double-digit growth in both Professional and Residential segments*
- *Net earnings per share for the full year increased 61 percent to \$2.79*
- *Average net working capital as a percentage of sales driven down to 14 percent as a result of company initiative*
- *Increased quarterly cash dividend to \$0.20 per share and authorized the repurchase of 3 million additional shares, as announced last week*
- *Company to develop new manufacturing plant in Eastern Europe to serve growing demands for precision irrigation in agriculture*

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. -- December 7 -- The Toro Company today reported net earnings of \$93.2 million, or \$2.79 per share, on net sales of \$1,690.4 million for its fiscal year ended October 31, 2010. In the fiscal 2009, the company delivered net earnings of \$62.8 million, or \$1.73 per share, on net sales of \$1,523.4 million.

For the fourth quarter, Toro reported net earnings of \$3.2 million, or \$0.10 per share, on net sales of \$337.3 million. In the comparable fiscal 2009 period, the company reported a net loss of \$0.5 million, or \$0.02 per share, on net sales \$288.6 million.

"For Toro, it was a year marked by many successes and a return to change in the right direction," said Michael J. Hoffman, Toro's chairman and chief executive officer. "Investments we made during the downturn, along with renewed strength in our end markets, particularly worldwide golf and landscape contractor, have our revenues and profits growing once again. New product innovation was a key contributor to our growth, helping increase penetration in key categories. I am very appreciative of our team's performance and what they collectively achieved this year.

"I am also pleased to announce that we are moving forward with a new manufacturing plant in Eastern Europe to serve increasing demands for precision irrigation in agriculture in that region. The move will put Toro closer to this growing market as micro irrigation becomes both a larger part of our business and of irrigated agriculture around the world due to its more efficient use of water."

On another positive note, the company reached its strategic goal of driving 12-month average net working capital as a percentage of sales down "into the teens" in the second quarter, and made measurable progress throughout the year finishing just under 14 percent at fiscal year end. This marks an improvement of more than 50 percent from when the initiative was announced in early 2007 and Toro had roughly 30 percent of sales tied up in working capital. The company expects working capital levels to continue in the mid-teens.

SEGMENT RESULTS

Professional

- Professional segment net sales for fiscal 2010 totaled \$1,085.5 million, up 12.4 percent from last year. Sales across all professional businesses increased for both the quarter and the year. Worldwide orders for golf equipment and precision irrigation systems accelerated due to increased capital spending, new golf projects in Asia, and the successful introduction of several product innovations.
- Overall shipments for landscape maintenance equipment saw solid growth on acceptance for new products, while both micro and residential and commercial irrigation sales were higher due to

increased global demand for precision irrigation solutions. For the fourth quarter, professional segment net sales were \$205.2 million, up 24.1 percent compared with the same period last year.

- Professional segment earnings for fiscal 2010 totaled \$173.8 million, up \$46.1 million from last year. For the fourth quarter, professional segment earnings were \$17.7 million, up \$16.5 million compared with the same period last year.

Residential

- Residential segment net sales for fiscal 2010 totaled \$589.7 million, up 10.7 percent from last year. Riding products posted strong gains fueled by expanded placement for Toro's competitively priced TimeCutter(R) zero-turn mowers and continued strong demand for TITAN(R) zero-turn mowers.
- Snow shipments were higher, benefiting from lean field inventory levels entering the season and positive customer acceptance for Toro's new redesigned line of snow throwers. For the fourth quarter, residential segment net sales were \$127.1 million, up 9.6 percent compared with the same period last year.
- Residential segment earnings for fiscal 2010 totaled \$58 million, up \$11.6 million from last year. For the fourth quarter, residential segment earnings were \$8.8 million, down \$5.5 million compared with the same period last year.

REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

Gross margin for fiscal 2010 improved 60 basis points to 34.1 percent compared to last year, driven mostly by favorable product mix and lower manufacturing costs. For the fourth quarter, gross margin decreased 100 basis points to 32.9 percent compared with the same period last year. The decline for the quarter was primarily due to higher commodity costs.

Selling, general and administrative (SG&A) expense for fiscal 2010 was up \$29.3 million, or 7.4 percent from last year, but declined as a percent of sales to 25.1 percent from 26 percent. For the fourth quarter, SG&A expense increased \$10.6 million, or 11.2 percent from the same period last year, but decreased as a percent of sales to 31.3 percent compared with 32.9 percent. In both periods, SG&A expense was up primarily due to higher employee incentive expense related to the company's significantly improved financial performance.

Other income for fiscal 2010 was \$7.1 million, up \$8.9 million from last year. The increase was due to expenses incurred last year for several legal matters and income this year from the investment in Red Iron Acceptance, the company's channel financing joint venture.

Interest expense for fiscal 2010 was \$17.1 million, down 2.6 percent compared with last year. For the fourth quarter, interest expense was even with the same period last year at \$4.4 million.

The effective tax rate for fiscal 2010 was 34 percent compared with 34.4 percent last year. The slight decrease was primarily the result of a valuation allowance last year related to foreign subsidiaries.

Accounts receivable at the end of fiscal 2010 totaled \$142.9 million, down slightly from last year on a sales increase of 11 percent. Net inventories for the year were \$194.4 million, up 10.3 percent from last year. Trade payables were \$125.1 million, up 37.4 percent from last year, driven by the implementation of a new supply chain finance initiative.

Resulting from strong earnings growth and working capital benefits, the company's cash flow from operations for the year totaled \$193.5 million compared with \$251.5 million last year. With a focus on returning value to shareholders, the company reported last week that its board of directors raised its regular quarterly cash dividend to \$0.20 per share from its previous quarterly dividend rate of \$0.18 per share. The board also authorized the repurchase of 3 million shares of common stock, in addition to the 1.3 million shares remaining under the prior authorization. For the year, the company repurchased \$136 million of company stock.

BUSINESS OUTLOOK

"We are encouraged with the improving health of our business and prospects for the future," said Hoffman. "Our extensive lineup of innovative new products and enduring focus on the customer have our strong brands competitively positioned to capitalize on the recovery in our markets. We expect growth to come from a number of

areas including international new golf development, the residential shift to zero-turn mowers, and continued momentum for precision irrigation solutions and landscape contractor equipment."

The company currently expects fiscal 2011 net earnings to be about \$3.20 per share on a revenue increase of about 5 percent. For its seasonally smaller fiscal first quarter, the company expects to report net earnings of about \$0.40 per share.

Non-GAAP Financial Measure

The company's long-term asset management goal was to reduce average net working capital as a percent of net sales below 20 percent, or "into the teens." The company defines net working capital as accounts receivable plus inventory less trade payables.

About The Toro Company

The Toro Company is a leading worldwide provider of outdoor maintenance equipment and beautification products to help customers care for golf courses, sports fields, public green spaces, commercial and residential properties, and agricultural fields.

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

2) KAWASAKI DENIES ANY MOVE TO BEATRICE, NEBRASKA FORMER HUSQVARNA PLANT

Chris Dunker, www.journalstar.com

December 15 - The future of Husqvarna's plant building in Beatrice remains a mystery, with operations scheduled to cease over the next month.

The Swedish lawnmower manufacturer announced in May it would be consolidating its Beatrice operations with its U.S. headquarters in Orangeburg, S.C., by the end of the year, taking over 300 jobs along with it.

The building's vacancy has led to rumors of potential suitors for the 274,000-square-foot facility.

One rumor that has held traction over the past few months is the transfer of a division of the Kawasaki Motors Corp., a manufacturer of motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, jet skis and other utility vehicles, now in Lincoln, to a Beatrice location.

Kawasaki also has contracts in the hundreds of millions of dollars to manufacture rail cars for rail lines in New York City, Connecticut and Washington, D.C.

The size of the rail car manufacturing work led to a rumor that Kawasaki would be moving the manufacturing of its smaller products to Beatrice.

"We had heard that rumor as well, but Kawasaki is not considering moving anything into the Husqvarna building," said Mike Boyle, manager of the Lincoln plant, in a message to the Daily Sun. He said no discussion has taken place about moving any part of the business to Beatrice.

"We certainly feel bad for people in Beatrice losing Husqvarna, but we are in no way looking at using that plant for Kawasaki," Boyle said.

John DeHardt, managing principal of the building for Kessinger-Hunter, the Husqvarna plant's owner, did not return the Daily Sun's call Tuesday.

The Husqvarna plant was built in Beatrice in 2004.

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

3) BRIGGS AND STRATTON ANNOUNCES PUBLIC OFFERING OF \$200 M OF SENIOR NOTES

MILWAUKEE -- Dec. 13 and 15 -- Briggs and Stratton Corporation announced today that it has commenced a public offering of \$200 million aggregate principal amount of its senior notes due 2020. The notes will be unsecured and will be guaranteed on a senior basis by its significant domestic subsidiary, Briggs and Stratton Power Products Group, LLC, and certain of its future domestic subsidiaries.

On December 15, Briggs and Stratton Corporation announced today that it has priced a public offering of \$225 million aggregate principal amount of its senior notes due 2020, which will bear interest at a rate of 6.875%. The offering is being made pursuant to a shelf registration statement and is expected to close on December 20, 2010.

The Company intends to use the net proceeds from the offering to redeem its outstanding 8.875% Senior Notes due March 15, 2011 and to pay fees and expenses in connection with the offering and redemption and for general corporate purposes.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch and J.P. Morgan will act as joint book-running managers for the offering.

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

4) MAKER OF SNOW THROWERS SUED OVER EXPLODING PLASTIC WHEELS

Rick Barrett www.jsonline.com

Dec. 13 -- Thousands of snow throwers with plastic wheels that can explode and cause injuries could still be in use even four years after a factory recall by the manufacturer, MTD Products Inc.

The recall targeted 130,000 snow throwers sold through hardware stores, home improvement centers and retailers like Kmart and Sears. They were sold from July 2004 through March 2006, for \$500 to \$800, under the brand names Yard Machines, Troy-Bilt and Craftsman.

The problem is the plastic wheels can explode as the tires are filled with air, sending plastic shrapnel flying.

More than 200 people, including a Milwaukee man, have been injured, even though more than 80% of the machine owners have been notified of the recall that began in October 2006.

"We think that we have exhausted every reasonable effort to contact people," but the work continues, MTD attorney Terry Hollister said Monday.

"We are resolving claims as they arrive, but more importantly, we are trying to prevent more injuries from occurring," Hollister said.

Based in Cleveland, MTD Products is one of the nation's largest outdoor power equipment makers.

The company said it initially received reports of 16 injuries, including fractured fingers, a broken toe and facial lacerations, from the plastic-wheel snow throwers when the tires were overinflated and the rims burst into pieces.

MTD cooperated with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission in the voluntary recall and told consumers to immediately stop using the machines until they received a kit to remedy the problem.

"It's very difficult. But we have worked very hard to track down as many people as we could," Hollister said.

Still, the recall notice came too late for Jim LaFleur, of Hugo, Minn., who was seriously injured while inflating a tire on his snow thrower.

Both of his index fingers and his right thumb were broken. Doctors have implanted metal pins in his fingers, and he now suffers from arthritis in those joints.

A transit bus driver, LaFleur also has lost partial use of his hands.

"In a fairly tight spot, I can't even use my index fingers to put a nut on a bolt," he said.

LaFleur said one of the plastic wheels exploded after he had checked the tire pressure and was putting in a little more air to bring the tire up to full pressure of 30 pounds per square inch.

"It was 'bang,' just like that. There was nothing but pieces left of the wheel," he said.

This fall, LaFleur sued MTD for his injuries. He and his wife, Kristine LaFleur, are seeking an undetermined amount of compensation in excess of \$150,000, according to the lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Minneapolis.

MTD should have known that plastic wheels and inflatable tires weren't a good combination, said one of their attorneys, Victor Harding of the Milwaukee law firm Warshafsky, Rotter, Tarnoff & Bloch.

Over time, plastic degrades and can become brittle. The wheels were not strong enough to handle the tire air pressure, according to Harding, whose firm has settled at least four similar lawsuits against MTD.

"The company says the tires had to be over-pressurized to explode, but I don't think that has been established yet," Harding said. "I think the company tried to save a nickel (by using plastic wheels), and it has come back to bite them in the butt."

Others have sued MTD, including a 56-year old truck driver who was blinded by plastic shrapnel when putting air in the tire of his snow thrower.

The company has since issued a free service kit, with pressure relief valves, labels and instructions, for consumers with the recalled snow throwers.

MTD says inflatable snow thrower tires should never be filled with high-pressure air compressor.

"Air compressors are high-volume, high-psi machines capable of over-inflating a tire, possibly causing it or the rim to burst," MTD says on its Web site.

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

5) MORE ETHANOL IN GASOLINE IS BAD NEWS FOR POWER EQUIPMENT, CRITICS SAY

Adrian Higgins www.washingtonpost.com

December 19 -- It seems like a great idea: Increase the amount of renewable ethanol from grain at the gas station and decrease America's reliance on foreign oil.

But a push to add another 50 percent to the ethanol content of some automobile fuel has opened a barrel of worms. Automakers say they don't know how it will affect their cars; power-equipment and boat manufacturers are predicting calamitous mis-fueling; and gas station owners are looking at a slew of legal and logistical impediments.

The Environmental Protection Agency has approved a request from the ethanol industry to allow ethanol content in a gallon of gas to climb from 10 to 15 percent. The waiver to the Clean Air Act to permit so-called E15 fuel applies only to cars and light trucks made since model year 2007, but the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and manufacturers argue that once gas stations sell it, consumers will mis-fuel their power equipment, with terrible results.

The availability of E15 could produce "a train wreck in the marketplace," said the institute's attorney, Bill Guerry. Opponents of E15 are considering a concerted legal action to try to reverse the waiver. "We don't know the long-term effects of E15 on automobiles," said Gloria Bergquist of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. "There's a sweep of studies underway now, and we had urged EPA to wait until next year when more of these studies would be concluded."

In approving the waiver Oct. 13, EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson said "thorough testing has shown that E15 does not harm emissions control equipment in newer cars and light trucks."

For veteran power-equipment guys such as Mick Matuskey, the prospect of E15 entering the fuel stream is vexing. Matuskey, co-owner of Power and Lawn Equipment in Gaithersburg, has been in the business for 44 years and remembers when snowblowers, chain saws and mowers lasted much longer.

"You're getting half of the life out of the product today compared to 30, 40 years ago," he said. Cheaper components and higher running temperatures are taking their toll. But critics say a 15 percent ethanol blend would shorten engine life more and make equipment prone to fuel leaks and fire hazards. Apart from causing engines to run hotter, ethanol fuel eats away at rubber components.

"E15 is going to make fuel lines on older equipment turn to mush a lot faster," Matuskey said. "You've got spillage and environmental issues as well as fire and safety issues."

Prentiss Searles of the American Petroleum Institute said, "Having seals fail on your backpack blower isn't a good thing, because you've got a gas tank sitting on your back."

Old technologies

Tools such as trimmers, mowers and blowers generally use engine technologies long abandoned by carmakers: air cooling, carburetion and, often, two-cycle engines fueled by an oil-gas mix. Ethanol blends cause engines to run leaner and hotter - modern auto engines can adjust for that; lawn mowers and chain saws cannot.

Today's gas-pump blend, ubiquitous and known as E10, pushes power equipment to the limit, said Kris Kiser, the petroleum group's executive vice president. With E15, "our machines fail," he said.

The institute says its members can develop machines that will run on more ethanol, just as they are making them less polluting. But there are as many as 200 million existing pieces of equipment now in jeopardy, used by homeowners, landscapers, foresters, companies and institutions.

Stephanie Dreyer, spokeswoman for the ethanol coalition that requested the waiver, Growth Energy, said labels at the pump, to be required by the EPA, will explicitly direct consumers to the right type of fuel. "There are two types of diesel on the road now, and they are indicated by a label," she said. "And as far as we know it hasn't been a problem."

The use of E15 in cars, she said, "will accelerate the use of renewable fuel, increase energy security, create jobs, reduce transportation costs and improve the environment." Dreyer said it will also encourage investment in the next generation of ethanol made from a variety of plant materials.

Cathy Milbourn, an EPA spokeswoman, says the agency is not advocating E15 but simply responding to a waiver request under the clean-air statute.

The waiver covers about one-fifth of the vehicles on the road. The agency is waiting for further engine emission tests by the Energy Department before deciding whether to extend approval of E15 for cars built since 2001.

If the agency extends the waiver back to model-year-2001 vehicles, E15 would be approved in more than half the automobiles in the country, a percentage that would grow as older cars are scrapped.

Power-equipment makers say consumers filling a portable gas can while also fueling their vehicles are not going to pay attention to a sign telling them to use E15 only in approved automobiles. They also speculate that gasoline retailers will make more money from E15 than E10, and if it becomes legal for 54 percent of automobiles, "at some point there is likely to be a wholesale transfer over to a majority fuel," Guerry said.

In time, E10 may no longer be available, at which point, Guerry said, "people are going to be stuck filling their portable containers with E15 no matter how effective the mis-fueling regulation is."

Other problems

Equipment makers are also worried that the ethanol, which absorbs water, will make the fuel unstable and destructive to engines when seasonable equipment is stored for months on end. Another problem, Kiser said, is that the faster engine idling speeds will cause machines with centrifugal clutches, such as chain saws, to engage blades at rest.

For gas station owners, the waiver has raised its own set of questions and concerns. Tanks, pipes and pumps must be listed by Underwriters Laboratories, an independent product-safety testing organization, for E15 to meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations, as well as contractual obligations with insurers and others.

"The existing infrastructure is not certified," said Tim Columbus, counsel to the Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America. "Somebody has got to go through all the hoops to get the fuel registered, and then you have to figure out what are you going to do with the existing infrastructure. This isn't going to happen in 10 minutes."

John Eichberger, an executive with the other major gas station trade group, the National Association of Convenience Stores, said some existing tanks are certified for E15 but others aren't.

"The bigger issue is the pipes from the tanks to the dispensers and the materials used to connect them, the gaskets, glues and seals," he said. As with replacing underground storage tanks, "you would have to crack concrete to get to them. Add a decimal point to the price."

With the extended waiver, E15 is "more likely to be assimilated into the marketplace, and mis-fueling will be more likely," Kiser said. And while the EPA may permit E15 in older vehicles, using the fuel might still void the manufacturer's warranty, he said. He predicted "a challenge for the consumer."

Congress is considering a bill that would shield gas retailers from liability suits for mis-fueled engines.

Another concern of Kiser's members in the American Petroleum Institute is that E15 will be cheaper to retailers and that eventually E10 will no longer be available. They have asked the EPA to mandate its continued sale.

Meanwhile, equipment makers, as well as retailers such as Matuskey, are trying to deal with the uncertainties spawned by the E15 waiver. If and when it arrives, "it'll have a major impact on our industry," he said.

6) A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT FROM 1513

Written on Christmas Eve, 1513

I salute you. I am your friend, and my love for you goes deep.

There is nothing I can give you which you have not. But there is much,
very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take. No heaven can
come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven!

No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant.

Take peace! The gloom of the world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within
our reach, is joy. There is radiance and glory in darkness, could we but see.

And to see, we have only to look. I beseech you to look!

Life is so generous a giver. But we, judging its gifts by their covering,
cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you
will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love by wisdom, with power.

Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the angel's hand that brings it to you.

Everything we call a trial, a sorrow or a duty, believe me, that angel's hand is there.

The gift is there and the wonder of an overshadowing presence. Your joys, too,
be not content with them as joys. They, too, conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering,
that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then to claim it; that is all!

But courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together,
wending through unknown country home.

And so, at this time, I greet you, not quite as the world sends greetings,
but with profound esteem and with the prayer that for you, now and
forever, the day breaks and shadows flee away.

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

7) CPSC, STIHL, RECALL TRIMMERS/BRUSHCUTTERS DUE TO INJURY HAZARD

Washington, D.C. -- December 16, 2010. The following product safety recall was voluntarily conducted by the firm in cooperation with the CPSC. Consumers should stop using the product immediately unless otherwise instructed.

It is illegal to resell or attempt to resell a recalled consumer product.

Name of Product: STIHL FS 310 Bike Handle Trimmer/Brushcutter

Units: About 1,000

Manufacturer: STIHL Incorporated, of Virginia Beach, Va.

Hazard: Vibration from the ignition module may cause the trimmer head to loosen and detach from the mounting, posing an injury hazard.

Incidents/Injuries: The company received three reports of incidents and no reports of injuries.

Description: The recalled bike handle trimmer/brushcutter has "STIHL" printed on the engine head. The model number FS 310 is located in two places, on the shaft and on the flywheel housing below the starter grip. This recall includes all units with serial numbers ranging from 27961 1030 through 27961 1119 and 27984 3607 through 27984 4556, which can be found on an adhesive label affixed to the bottom of the fuel tank and etched into the metal frame on the bottom of the engine.

Sold at: Authorized STIHL dealers nationwide from June 2009 to April 2010 for about \$550.

Manufactured in: United States

Remedy: STIHL informed purchasers for whom they had addresses directly by letter after April 15, 2010. Consumers should stop using this trimmer/brushcutter immediately and take it to an authorized STIHL dealer for a new ignition module, which will be installed at no cost to the consumer.

Consumer Contact: For more information, contact STIHL between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ET Monday through Friday at (800) 610-6677 or visit STIHL's website at www.stihlusa.com

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

8) 2011 OPE INDUSTRY MEETING AND EVENTS CALENDAR

2011 OPE INDUSTRY MEETING AND EVENTS CALENDAR	
January 18-20, 2011	BTME-BIGGA , British Turf Management and the British International Golf & Greenkeepers Association Show, Harrogate International Center, England
January 18 – 21, 2011	World of Concrete , Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV
February 28 – March 3, 2011	The Rental Show , American Rental Association Conference and Trade Show, Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV
February 9 – 10, 2011	GIS , Golf Industry Show, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL
February 12 – 15, 2011	OPEAA , Outdoor Power Equipment Aftermarket Association Annual Meeting, Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club, St. Petersburg, FL
February 27 – March 2, 2011	OPEESA , Outdoor Power Equipment and Engine Service Association, 10 th Annual Members Meeting, Four Seasons Resort, Palm Beach, FL
March 13, 2011	Daylight Savings Time Begins
April 7 - 9, 2011	EETC , Equipment and Engine Training Council 15 th Annual Conference, Radisson Hotel Milwaukee West, Milwaukee, WI
May 10-12, 2011	National Hardware Show , Las Vegas Convention Center and Sands Convention Center
June 19-25, 2011	Skills USA , National Leadership and Skills Conference, Kansas City, Missouri
	OPEI , Outdoor Power Equipment Institute Annual Meeting
September 4-6, 2011	GAFA (with SPOGA) , International Garden Trade Fair with the International Trade Fair for Sport, Camping and Garden Lifestyle, Cologne, Germany
September 6-8, 2010	IOG SALTEX , Grounds Care, Sports Facilities, Amenities, Landscaping And Estate Management Outdoor Trade Show, Windsor Race Track, Windsor, Berkshire, England
September 19-21, 2011	GLEE , International Garden and Leisure Show, NEC Birmingham, England
October 19-22, 2011	FFA , Future Farmers of America Annual Convention, Indianapolis, IN
October 27-29, 2011	GIE+EXPO , Green Industry and Equipment Expo, Louisville, KY (combining EXPO and the GIE Show)
November 6, 2011	Daylight Savings Time Ends

9) UNION VOTES IN FAVOR OF KOHLER CONTRACT

www.wbay.com

December 19 -- After four months of negotiations, union members vote in favor of Kohler Company's proposed labor contract.

"I think both sides worked very hard on this proposal. I think it recognizes the effort by both sides that went into this. And we're pleased with the outcome today," says Paul Kardish, Kohler Company attorney.

"I am disappointed. maybe not surprised. I know there were many that are simply in a position that they have to support their family," says Dave Boucher, UAW Local 833 spokesperson.

Even with union leaders recommending against voting for the proposal, 62 percent of UAW Local 833 members voted to pass it.

When the final votes came in, union leaders were not happy with the new labor contract their own members had just passed. "What we didn't like about it? Pretty much the whole thing," says Dave Bergene, UAW Local 833 president.

Union and Kohler officials still disagreed on a key point. "I would've preferred a strong rejection as a message to the company to negotiate a fair and livable contract which I don't believe we actually received here," says Boucher.

"The contract needed to address a couple objectives. And that was to make sure our manufacturing operations competitive long term but yet minimize the impact on them. And that's what we believe was accomplished today," says Todd Weber, Kohler Company spokesperson.

The new contract comes with a five-year wage freeze, a flexible workforce, a two-tier wage structure and a \$1,000 signing bonus. Union officials say many members agreed the contract was unfair, but couldn't afford to take any chances, especially with the signing incentive.

"Times are tough. Take what you can get. I am working, making a good living. I'd like to keep it that way," says Greg Umnus, union member.

"I've been here 37 years at Kohler and this is the first time Herb wanted to buy our votes so I think he wants this contract pretty bad," says Kenn Hibbard, union member.

While union leaders are disappointed, Kohler officials say they're happy both sides could finally come to an agreement.

10) STIHL RECALLS ABOUT 5,000 CHAIN SAWS THAT MAY POSE RISK

Stihl Inc. has recalled about 5,000 chain saws that could have sticky throttles and pose a risk of cutting the user, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

This is Stihl's second recall this month. The German-owned power-tool company, with U.S. headquarters in Virginia Beach, recalled about 1,000 Bike Handle Trimmer /Brushcutter a week ago because vibration could cause the head to come loose.

On Thursday, the agency said Stihl voluntarily pulled from shelves the MS 361C saws (the C-Q version), which have a chain brake activated by the rear handle. They have an orange top casing, gray base and black handle with the style number printed in an orange circle on the side.

The throttle trigger on the saws can stick after being released and could allow the engine to continue to run at a high enough speed to drive the chain. Stihl has received three reports of the throttle trigger sticking but no reports of injuries, according to the commission.

The saws were sold from February 2004 through August 2009 for about \$640.

Consumers should stop using the saws and return them to a Stihl dealer for a free repair. For more information, call (800) 610-6677 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Monday through Friday or visit www.stihlusa.com

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

11) EMAK ACQUIRES MAJORITY SHAREHOLDING IN UKRAINIAN COMPANY EPICENTER LTD

Bagnolo in Piano (RE), 23 December 2010 - Emak S.p.A., one of the leading European operators in the manufacturing and distribution of outdoor power equipment for gardening, forestry and small farming activities, today entered into an agreement for the acquisition of 61% of the share capital of Epicenter LTD; with registered office in Kiev, it has been the distributor of Oleo-Mac trademark products in the Ukrainian market since 2000 and closed the 2009 financial year with a turnover of around €5 million and a net profit of around €0.2 million.

The operation is in line with the Group's strategy for development through external means in markets with high potential for growth. With this acquisition, Emak seeks to achieve better penetration in a market with great potential such as the Ukrainian market, where Emak is already an important operator.

As in the past, Emak's strategy is to provide an important partner, as Epicenter has already proved to be, with the necessary means to develop the distribution network and internal organization, exploiting at the same time its knowledge and reputation in the territory.

Today's agreement provides for the transfer of 61% of the shares to Emak by April 2011 at an overall price of between €1.4 and €1.7 million. The consideration for the operation will be calculated with the market multiples method, on the basis of the due diligence to be carried out on Epicenter.

The agreement also gives EMAK the right to a call option for the acquisition of a further stake of 14% to be exercised by 2013, bringing its shareholding to 75%.

The acquisition by EMAK will be financed by using its own normally held resources.

The inclusion of the target company within EMAK's scope of consolidation will take effect from the effective date of the acquisition of control of the company.

Due to the small size of the target company, the conditions of materiality provided for by art. 71 of Consob's Regulations for Issuers no. 11971 of 14/5/1999 do not apply, and as a result, EMAK shall not be preparing a specific informative document.

COMMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN, FAUSTO BELLAMICO

"The agreement entered into today is in line with the development strategy by external means that the Group is following in order to strengthen its distribution network. Thanks to the newly acquired Epicenter, the Group will be able to further develop its operations in a strategic country such as Ukraine, a market with great potential for growth."

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

12) BLIZZARD MAKES WINTER WONDERLAND FOR SNOW THROWERS, ICE MELTERS

NEW YORK – December 27 -- Better weather forecasting and smart inventory management helped the makers of ice melters and snow throwers benefit from the East Coast blizzard, even as it wreaked havoc upon commuters, travellers and homeowners.

"We began preparing for this very type of weather in the spring," said Mary Kay Warner, a spokeswoman for International Salt, one of the largest suppliers of bulk and packaged salt along the East Coast, and "we've been stockpiling since April." International Salt is a sister company to Morton Salt, both owned by Germany's K+S Aktiengesellschaft.

"This was the missing area of snow," according to Kurt Svendsen of Toro Co., which makes lawnmowers and other landscaping machines in addition to snow throwers which account for about 5% of its annual sales. This year has seen good snowfall throughout the U.S. Midwest and Europe, but had yet to see any meaningful snow accumulation in the Northeast and East Coast to drive snow-thrower sales, he said.

Weather forecasting has gotten better, and companies have invested in systems to manage inventories better around peak snow season, International Salt's Warner said, and are "predicting so well in advance." As a result it was "very, very busy last week," as customers got early warnings about the coming nor'easter storm and heeded them, and now "the phones are very busy to replenish" salt stock kept by retailers, for home and business use, and municipalities, for roadway use.

Peggy Landon of Compass Minerals said salt prices are "essentially flat with last year," meaning the snowfall shouldn't burden already cash-strapped states any more than it otherwise would. Compass Minerals owns North American Salt, which Landon said doesn't do business on the East Coast.

Mark Klein of Cargill, another major salt supplier, said to keep in mind that bidding for most rock salt is in the fall and much is delivered before the first snowfall, "so much of the pricing is done."

Even pet products get a boost from from a storm of this magnitude. Toni Eberhardt, a spokeswoman for PetSmart Inc. (PETM), said a store manager in Alexandria, Va., reported strong sales of pet-safe ice melter, which won't harm pets' sensitive paws. Pet owners also buy winter clothing for their animals, she said, and humans will stock up on pet food when inclement weather is predicted the same way they will stock their own pantries with supplies.

Both home-improvement giants, Home Depot Inc. (HD) and Lowe's Cos. (LOW), said demand for snow throwers, ice melt and shovels was especially strong from North Carolina to Maine. Karen Cobb, a Lowe's spokeswoman, said demand was following the track of the storm, and all its stores are operating on a normal schedule, though as of mid-morning it was still working to fully plow some parking lots. Home Depot's Ron Defeo said "a few" of its stores in the hardest-hit areas would open late Monday morning due to the snow, which caused a state of emergency to be declared in New Jersey.

Since snow throwers are a small part of Toro's overall business, spokesman Svendsen said, investors shouldn't look at this as a major opportunity for revenue or profit upside, though it will help the current, fiscal-first quarter.

That said, it should prove helpful to inventory levels, which were lean in 2009 and beefed up this year, so more of the additional inventory Toro shipped is being sold at stores, which bodes well for the 2011 selling season and the fiscal fourth quarter that ends next October.

Toro had "significant financial challenges" about 30 years ago, he said, because of selling too many snow throwers into the market, and has paid careful attention to both its own inventory and what's at its vendors ever since.

Plus, he said, extra snow-removal-related revenue for its landscaping customers means landscapers may be quicker to purchase new lawn-care equipment next year. In other words, "a big nor'easter is a beautiful thing."

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)

13) OPEESA OFFICERS, BOARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Co.	Address	City State	Email	Position/Term
Mark Vining	Roberts Supply	4203 Metric Drive	Winter Park FL	m.vining@robertssupply.com	President
Robert Graham	Engine Warehouse	7415 Empire Central PO Box 40490	Houston TX Houston TX	Robert.graham@engwarehouse.com	Vice President <i>Annual Meeting</i>
Pete Yunker	Power Equipment Systems	1645 Salem Industrial Dr. PO Box 669	Salem OR Salem OR	petey@pesnet.com	Sec/Treas.
Rob Zucker	Outdoor Equipment Distributors	2721 Discovery Drive PO Box 58494	Raleigh NC Raleigh NC	rzucker@oedinc.com	Immediate Past President
Todd Winstead	Tidewater Power Equipment	5796 Thurston Ave.	Virginia Beach VA	twinstead@tpeco.com	2011
Virginia O'Neill	O'Neill Associates	795 Canning Parkway	Victor NY	virginia@oneilloutdoor.com	2011
Denis Bedard	Husqvarna Professional Products	7349 Statesville Road	Charlotte NC	Denis.bedard@husqvarna.com	2011 <i>Manufacturer/Affiliate Rep.</i>
Robert Smith	Smith's South-Central Sales Co.	1802 S. Arkansas St. PO Box 578	Springhill LA	rsmith@smithssc.com	2011
Tim Congdon	Congdon Associates Dist. Co. – CADCO	1365 Strykers Road PO Box 350	Phillipsburg NJ	timc@cadcodist.com	2012
Mike Lupo	TD Retail Card Services	1000 MacArthur Boulevard	Mahwah, NJ	Mike.lupo@tdrcs.com	2012 <i>Manufacturer/Affiliate Rep.</i>
Ron Monroe	Hayward Distributing Co.	4061 Perimeter Drive	Columbus OH	rmonroe@haydist.com	2013
Mike Rounsavall	Dixie Sales Co.	5920 Summit Ave.	Browns Summit NC	mrounsavall@dixiesales.com	2013
Nancy Cueroni	OPEESA	37 Pratt Street	Essex	Info@opeesa.com	

[BACK TO THE TOP](#)