

Toolbox Safety Topic

Chain Saw Safety

I. Chain saws can be great labor saving tools, but if not operated properly and with respect, they can quickly cause severe injury and death. At least two people died from injuries related to chain saws during the first week of cleanup after Hurricane Hugo several years ago. We will cover a few of the basics in chain saw safety below, but it cannot be stressed enough that the operator's manual be consulted for model-specific safety information. **READ THE OPERATOR'S MANUAL!**

II. First, ask yourself if you need to use a chain saw. If you have only small branches (4 inches or less), you should use a handsaw or axe. Chain saws are not suited for cutting such small branches.

Second, if you haven't already read the operator's manual, then **READ THE OPERATOR'S MANUAL!** This resource will give you specific information on checking and adjusting the chain tension, which is very important for safe operation, in addition to proper maintenance and operation.

Third, make sure you are wearing the appropriate protective equipment when operating a chain saw. This includes safety glasses or goggles, heavy-duty non-slip gloves, sturdy non-slip boots, hearing protection, trim-fitting clothing, long-sleeve shirt and pants, leather chaps if available, and a hard hat.

III. **Transporting the Saw:** Put the chain guard on the saw when not in use. Always carry the saw at your side with the cutting bar and chain to the rear and to the outside. Never carry a chain saw in the passenger area of a vehicle.

Fueling the Saw: Use the fuel mix recommended by the manufacturer. Never fuel a hot chain saw; let it cool first. Always fuel in a clear area away from debris. If your fuel can has no spout, use a funnel. Wipe the saw clean of any spilled fuel after fueling, and never smoke while fueling.

Starting the Saw: The safest way to start the saw is to move 10 feet or more away from the fueling area, place the saw in a clear, debris-free area, and hold the saw firmly on the ground by putting your foot through the rear handle (if possible) and hold it down with one hand on the top handle. Pull the starter cord with the other hand. The chain should not be moving while the saw is idling. Never start the saw while holding it off the ground, or by "drop starting" it.

Cutting: Clear away anything that has a chance of interfering with the operation. Remove debris that could cause you to slip or lose your balance or accidentally contact the chain. Keep both hands firmly on the saw when cutting. Kickback occurs when the saw rotates back, or "kicks back" at the operator due to the nose of the saw contacting an object or obstruction. To prevent kickback:

- ✓ Use a saw equipped with a chain brake or kick back guard.
- ✓ Hold the saw firmly with both hands. Grip top handle by putting the thumb around it.
- ✓ Watch for twigs that can snag the chain.
- ✓ Don't pinch the chain while cutting the log.
- ✓ Saw with the lower part of the bar close to the bumper, not on the top near the nose.
- ✓ Maintain high saw speed when entering or leaving a cut.
- ✓ Keep the chain sharp.
- ✓ Do not reach above your shoulder to cut. The chain is too close to your face in this position.

Also, remember that many injuries occur because the operator got too tired or withstood long periods of saw vibration. Take frequent breaks.

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Date: _____

Meeting Conducted By: _____ Title: _____

Attendees

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