



**CHAINSAW SAFETY**

Any tool powerful enough to slice through wood can do the same to human flesh, so chainsaw injuries are often serious. Before you operate a chainsaw, make sure you read and understand the operator’s manual and make sure you have the right chainsaw for the job. The instruction manual should describe the saw’s capabilities. If you rent a saw, be sure to get a demonstration of how it works, including its safety features. Then make sure your saw is sharp, properly tensioned, and in good condition. When you’re going to use a chain saw, wear protective clothing which includes a hard hat, safety goggles, gloves to give you a good grip, hearing protection, steel-toed shoes with nonslip soles, and trim-fitting clothes that won’t get caught in the chain.

Start your chainsaw according to the manual’s direction. Clear the work area so the chain won’t touch anything but the wood you want to cut and place the saw on a level surface; never rest a saw on your leg or drop-start it. Stand to the side of the saw so you won’t follow the cut through into your leg and stand on the uphill side of your work so it won’t roll into you. Hold the saw parallel to the ground with your left arm straight for better control and to reduce the chance of the saw pushing into you if it kicks back.

Keep both hands on the saw while its running. Work slowly, don’t rush. Let the chainsaw do the work; never force it. Avoid cutting above mid-chest height. Never attempt to cut a tree with a diameter greater than the length of the chainsaw blade and watch for branches that may spring back as you cut. Always be aware of what is in the saw’s downward path after the cut. It’s a good idea to take frequent breaks from cutting so you don’t operate the saw when you’re tired.

Although some chainsaw injuries are caused by operator error, kickback is the greatest cause of chainsaw injuries. In kickback, the upper chain “grabs” in the wood or an obstruction and forces the saw backward, causing operator to either lose control of the saw or lose balance, bringing the saw into contact with the body. Some chainsaws have chain brakes that are designed to instantly stop the saw after kickback. While these don’t prevent kickback, they can reduce the severity of injury from it. Carry the saw below your waist, with the engine off and guide bar pointed to the rear, so if you trip the saw drops behind you.

If your saw is electric, make sure you use an extension cord that’s approved for outdoor use and don’t use the saw in a damp environment. Fuel gasoline-

powered chainsaws outdoors, being careful not to overfill or spill the fuel. Never refuel a hot saw. Let it cool down first, and have a fire extinguisher nearby.

It’s dangerous to work alone with a chainsaw. Have a companion within calling distance, but keep bystanders and helpers at a safe distance from operation so that they will not be injured by the saw, flying chips, sawdust or by what you’re working on.