

Using a Chain Saw Safely

All PPE items must be inspected prior to each use for

A Fact Sheet prepared by the National Telecommunications Safety Panel

Introduction

Following a storm or other natural disaster, it is very common to encounter downed trees and/or tree limbs that must be cleared in order to restore service. Largescale tree removal and tree trimming is best left to professionals, but smaller jobs may be performed by individuals using chain saws. A chain saw is a very useful tool, but it can also be very dangerous if not used properly. This fact sheet describes safe use of gasoline-powered chain saws, but almost all of these precautions apply to electric or pneumatic saws as well.

Preparation

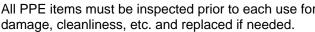
Before beginning any task involving a chain saw:

- Read the owner's manual and become familiar with all the features and operation of the saw.
- Check controls, chain tension, and all bolts and handles for proper function and adjustment.
- Make sure the saw has these features, and they are workina:
 - Chain brake (manual or inertia)
 - Chain catcher
 - o Safety throttle switch
 - On/off switch
 - o Spark arrester
- Make sure the carburetor is properly adjusted.
- Make sure the chain is sharp and have extra chains on hand.
- Have an approved fuel container available for refueling.
- Remove or secure any loose-fitting clothing, straps, etc. that could become tangled in the saw.

Personal Protective Equipment

The following PPE is recommended for anyone using a chain saw. Check with your Company's Safety dept. for the specific requirements of your organization.

- Head protection hardhat or helmet.
- Eye/Face protection face shield with goggles or glasses.
- Hearing protection ear plugs and/or muffs.
- Hand protection leather gloves
- Leg protection chaps or chain saw protective
- Foot protection safety toe boots





Inspect the Work Site for Hazards

Upon arrival at the work site, check for:

- Power, telephone, and cable TV lines. Assume all lines to be energized, whether they are downed or aerial! Be aware that lines can become energized at any moment by contact with tree limbs.
- Broken or hanging branches, leaning trees, poles, or other structures that are unstable and may fall.
- Young trees that other trees have fallen on and bent over. When cleared, they may spring back up
- Trip hazards downed trees, rocks, holes, wire, cable, etc.
- Poisonous plants.
- Dangerous insects, reptiles, or animals.
- Vehicle traffic if near a roadway.

Operating the Saw Safely

Follow these guidelines when operating the chain saw:

- Fuel the saw at least 10 ft. away from any ignition sources. Allow the saw to cool before refueling.
- Place the saw on a solid, stable surface for starting. Do not "drop start" the saw.
- Do not use a gasoline-powered chain saw indoors.
- Plan an escape path away from the projected fall of the limb or tree.
- Clear the area of obstacles that might interfere with cutting the tree or obstruct the escape path.
- Keep other persons away from the saw while cutting and beyond the "fall zone" of limbs or trees.
- Watch for objects under tension and avoid felling an object onto another object.
- Use caution when cutting a dead tree as the top may break off.
- Keep hands on the handles and maintain secure footing while operating the saw.
- Maintain a firm grip on the saw and always be prepared for kickback.
- Watch for nails, wire, rocks, etc. before and during
- Do not cut with the tip of the saw.
- Do not cut above shoulder level.
- Do not use the saw on a ladder or in a tree.
- If using a saw while elevated in a bucket truck, attach the saw with a lanyard to the bucket or boom in case it is dropped.

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Using a Chain Saw Safely, continued

- Shut off the saw or engage the chain brake whenever the saw is carried more than 50 ft., or across uneven terrain.
- Avoid working alone if possible.
- Take adequate rest breaks and avoid working when fatigue reduces your concentration.
- Practice proper body mechanics when cutting bend at the knees, not the back. Do not over-reach.
- Depending on weather conditions, be alert for symptoms and take precautions to prevent heat or cold stress.
- Stop work under high wind or possible lightning conditions.
- When bucking up (cutting) a downed tree, place a plastic wedge in the cut to keep the saw from binding up.

References

OSHA Fact Sheet "Working Safely with Chain Saws" http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/chainsaws.pdf

OSHA Fact Sheet "Tree Trimming Tips" http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/trim.pdf

American Red Cross "Fact Sheet: Using a Chain Saw Safely" http://www.redcross.org/pubs/dspubs/chainsaw.pdf

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Page 2 of 2

rev. 3/07