

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Chain Saw Safety



Carl Smith, a noted U.S. Forester, states that the chainsaw is **THE** most dangerous hand tool that can be purchased on the open market. Every year over 40,000 people are injured while using chainsaws in the U.S. Total medical costs for chainsaw injuries is around \$300 million dollars per year. Workers' Compensation costs are estimated at approximately \$100 million dollars per year. The average medical cost for a chainsaw injury is over \$7,500 dollars per year. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 80 percent of injuries due directly to chainsaws affect the hands and legs.

Learning to operate the chainsaw properly and to maintain it in good working condition will allow you to work more productively and without injury.

Following are some tips to assist you in accomplishing chainsaw projects more productively and efficiently:

BEFORE STARTING THE SAW –

- Check controls, chain tension, and all bolts and handles to insure that they are working properly and according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Fuel the saw at least 10 feet away from ignition sources.
- Check the fuel container for the following requirements
 - ~Must be made of metal or plastic
 - ~Can't exceed 5 gallon capacity
 - ~Must be approved by Underwriter's laboratories (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), the Department of Transportation or other National Recognized Testing Laboratory

WHEN OPERATING THE SAW –

- Keep both hands on the handles and maintain secure footing while operating the chainsaw.
- Clear the area of obstacles that might interfere with the cutting or your path of retreat.
- Do not cut overhead.
- Shut off or release the throttle when retreating.
- Shut off or engage the chain brake whenever the saw is carried more than 50 feet, or across hazardous terrain.
- Be prepared for kickback; use saws that reduce kickback danger (chain brakes, low kickback chains, guide bars, etc.)

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT –

Personal protective equipment (PPE) for the head, eyes, ears, face hands and legs are designed to prevent or lessen the severity of injuries to employees using a chain saw.

- PPE must be inspected prior to use on each work shift to ensure it is in serviceable condition.
- The following PPE must be used when hazards make it necessary:
 - ~ Head Protection – Hard hat is recommended for this use
 - ~ Hearing Protection – You should wear approved ear plugs or approved ear muffs.
 - ~ Eye/Face Protection – You should always wear approved eye/face protection, either approved glasses with side shields or full face shield.
 - ~ Leg Protection – A good set of protection chaps can be purchased for around \$75.00. I believe you will have to agree that this is a cheap investment when you consider the cost- as mentioned earlier - can amount to about \$7,500 dollars for the average chainsaw accident.
 - ~ Foot Protection – A good sound pair of leather boots or toes with steel toes are very acceptable for this type of work.
 - ~ Hand Protection – Spend the money for a good pair of sure grip safety gloves. Again, this is a small investment when you consider the cost of an accident affecting your hand or hands.

BASIC OPERATING PROCEDURES –

Refueling the engine - When refueling the engine, use a funnel or flexible nozzle to avoid spilling fuel on the engine. Never refuel a hot engine, allow the engine to cool down. This will also allow the operator to get a little rest. Be sure that you refuel away from areas that might have combustible materials. **One other point to consider when refueling:** Make sure that sawdust or other debris is cleaned from around the fuel tank opening, for obvious reasons.

Starting the saw – Place saw on level ground in an area free of rocks, making sure that the bar is clear of dirt. Turn the saw on, and with one foot placed in the hand guard at the rear of the saw, grip the top handle of the saw firmly with one hand. Use the other hand to pull the starting rope. Small saws may not have enough room to place your foot in the hand guard. If so, make sure that the saw is held firmly on the ground. Never drop start a saw. You can hold the saw only with one hand and have no control whatsoever over the swinging action that the bar will make.

Planning –Before you start a cutting project, look around for objects or obstacles that might hinder or endanger you. Be sure that the area is clear of bystanders and plan for an escape route, in case something goes wrong.

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