

Logging - Chainsaw Safety

Although current model chainsaws are equipped with a number of effective safety features, during the 5 year period of 2009 – 2013, operators suffered an estimated 115,895 chainsaw injuries*.

These statics indicate a very preventable trend of reoccurring injuries.

Before Cutting

- **Suit up for safety first**—because protective gear is your last line of defense. Always wear a hardhat, safety glasses, hearing protection, and sturdy gloves and boots (steel toe and cut resistant are best). Cut resistant pants or “chaps” are cheap protection at \$75. All protective equipment should meet industry standards and be maintained in serviceable condition.
- **See your saw.** In other words, check it out. Does it have the necessary safety features such as a chain brake, throttle lock, chain catcher, on-off switch, dogs or bumpers (saw stabilizers) and anti-vibration system? Is it in working order? Is the housing intact with no cracks?
- **Stay sharp.** Keeping the chain and bar up to snuff is the single biggest challenge for homeowners. For the chain: file using filing guides and gauges at the first sign of dullness. Consider keeping a sharpened chain handy rather than stopping to sharpen or pushing on a dull chain. Check chain tension periodically, too. For the bar: oil with a quality oil of proper weight for the season.

While Cutting

- **Start smart.** Before starting, put on the chain brake and the decompression, if available. Hold rear handle firmly, with either your foot while the saw is on the ground, or between your legs.
- **Brake for safety.** Use the chain brake when you start the saw, take more than a few steps with the saw running or take a hand off of the saw to do work, like throwing a piece of firewood.
- **Steer clear of kickback.** It’s a common cause of serious injury. Kickback is the force that sends the bar flying back at you as fast as 60 mph. There will be no time for operator reaction. It happens mostly when wood contacts the top corner of the bar, a.k.a. the “hazard corner.” Always grip the handle firmly with both hands, hold the saw close to your body—don’t reach, avoid cutting with the hazard corner and cut wood only at full throttle.
- **More tool tips:** Use only the bar and chain designated for your saw, never cut above chest height, don’t wear loose clothing or drawstrings, bend at the knees, not the waist, when cutting at ground level and stop rolling logs by maintaining the shape of tree-length piles for stability. Finally, keep people and pets out of your work zone.

*Epidemiology of Chain Saw Related Injuries, United States: 2009 through 2013
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