



GOALS

This safety session should teach employees:

- Some of the dangers of using chain saws
- Safe work practices to follow to protect themselves when using a chain saw
- The importance of knowing their equipment well and keeping it in good condition

Applicable Regulation: 29 CFR 1910.243 and .266



1. Chain saws are powerful tools to help you in landscaping work or cleaning up after storm damage—but they can cause deadly injuries.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that there are approximately 36,000 chain saw injuries each year treated in hospital emergency rooms.
- Never work alone because of the possibility of serious injury, but be sure that coworkers are far enough away to be safe from falling limbs or other hazards.
 - Have a first-aid kit on hand in case of an accident.
 - If an injury should occur, apply direct pressure over the site of heavy bleeding.
- Be wary of overhead or downed power lines—ALWAYS ASSUME THEY ARE ENERGIZED!
 - Contact the utility company to have them de-energized.
- Never work aloft, whether in a tree or bucket truck, unless you have had specialized training and use proper fall protection.

2. Always wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE), including:

- Head, face, and hearing protection;
- Leather or cotton gloves plus chaps or chain saw-protective pants; *and*
- Chain saw-protective work boots with steel toes.

3. Know your saw—read the owner’s manual before you use it—learn any special features it may have.

- Inspect the saw before each use to be sure it is in good condition—make sure it is well lubricated.
- Be sure the chain is sharp—keep several sharpened chains on hand.
 - Hitting the ground with the tip, hitting a rock or nails, or cutting dirty wood will immediately dull the chain.
 - A sharp chain will require less pressure to operate and be less tiring.
 - A sharp chain will also lesson the possibility of kickback.
- Be sure the saw has these safety features that are working properly:
 - Chain brake
 - Chain saw kickback device
 - Safety throttle switch that stops the chain when pressure on the throttle is released.
- Choose the proper size saw for the job.



- 4. Protect yourself from kickback injury, which can occur if the saw binds.**
 - Avoid cutting with the tip or upper quarter of the bar.
 - Use a tip guard that covers the end of the bar.
 - When bucking up (cutting a downed tree), place a plastic wedge into the cut to keep the saw from binding.
 - Keep both hands on the saw when cutting, and keep your left elbow stiff.
 - Stand to one side of the saw (instead of behind) so you won't be hit if the saw does kick back.
 - Never try to cut something above shoulder height—you won't have sufficient control.
- 5. Follow these safety practices as well:**
 - Refuel at least 10 feet from any open flame.
 - Let the saw cool down for 30 minutes before refueling.
 - Don't allow any smoking around the refueling area.
 - Carry gasoline in an approved portable container.
 - Start the saw at least 10 feet away from the refueling area.
 - Always start the chain saw on the ground or other firm support.
 - Drop-starting a chain saw is dangerous and prohibited by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.
 - Shut off the saw or engage the chain brake when carrying the saw.
 - Be wary of dead trees, vines, or hanging branches—any of which could fall and injure anyone in the area.
 - Also watch out for young trees that others have fallen against—when the fallen tree is removed they may spring back and injure someone.
 - If trees are being felled, make sure everyone stands well back from the projected fall area—they don't always come down where you expect.



DISCUSSION POINTS:

Ask your trainees if they know of any accidents or near misses that have occurred involving the use of chain saws. The more actual happenings that are discussed, the more workers will realize how many different types of situations can be dangerous—and the more they will understand the importance of following rules for safe operation.



CONCLUSION:

There are a lot of things that can go wrong when you work with chain saws. And if something does go wrong, the results are less likely to be minor than to be extremely serious.



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE:

Have your employees take the Use Chain Saws Safely quiz. By testing their knowledge, you can decide whether they are fully aware of the hazards of using chain saws and how to protect themselves, or whether they need to review this important subject again soon.



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- Never work aloft, whether in a tree or bucket truck, unless you have had specialized training and use proper fall protection.

Always wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE), including:

- Head, face, and hearing protection;
- Leather or cotton gloves plus chaps or chain saw-protective pants; *and*
- Chain saw protective work boots with steel toes.

Know your saw—read the owner’s manual before you use it.

- Inspect the saw before each use.
- Be sure the chain is sharp to prevent binding.
- Be sure the saw has these safety features that are working properly.
 - Chain brake
 - Chain saw kickback device
 - Safety throttle switch
- Choose the proper size saw for the job.

Protect yourself from kickback injury, which can occur if the saw binds.

- Avoid cutting with the tip or upper quarter of the bar.
- Keep both hands on the saw when cutting.
- Keep your left elbow stiff.
- Stand to one side so you won’t be hit if the saw does kick back.
- Never try to cut something above shoulder height—you won’t have sufficient control.

Follow these safety practices as well:

- Refuel at least 10 feet from any open flame.
- Start the saw at least 10 feet away from the refueling area.
- Always start the chain saw on the ground or other firm support.
- Shut off the saw or engage the chain brake when carrying the saw.