

Chain saw safety

Each year, approximately 36,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries from using chain saws. The risk of injury increases after hurricanes and other natural disasters, when untrained operators use chain saws to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches.

Protect against injury while using a chain saw:

- Use, adjust and maintain the chain saw according to manufacturer's instructions provided in the manual accompanying the chain saw.
- Make sure to properly sharpen chain saw blades and lubricate the blade with bar and chain oil. Periodically check and adjust the tension of the chain saw blade to ensure good cutting action.
- Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job and include safety features such as a chain brake, front and rear hand guards, stop switch, chain catcher and a spark arrester.
- Wear appropriate protective equipment, including hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, cut-resistant leg wear (chain saw chaps) that extend from the waist to the top of the foot and sturdy boots that cover the ankle.
- Avoid contact with power lines.
- Always cut at waist level or below to ensure that you maintain control over the chain saw.
- Bystanders or co-workers should remain at least two tree lengths (at least 150 feet) away from anyone sawing down a tree and at least 30 feet from anyone operating a chain saw to remove limbs or cut a fallen tree
- If injury occurs, apply direct pressure over site(s) of heavy bleeding while getting medical help. This act may save lives.

Beware of injury from the release of bent trees or branches.

Take extra care in cutting "spring poles" – trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on or caught under another object. If the tree or branch is suddenly released, it may strike the person cutting it, or a bystander, with enough force to cause serious injury or death. Even a small tree or branch may pose a hazard when it is released from tension.

To avoid "spring pole" injury:

- Identify the maximum point of tension on the spring pole
- Slowly shave the underside of the tree, rather than cut through to allow the tree or branch, to release tension slowly

How you can help

- It is best to have a chain saw operator who has training and experience in safe chain saw use and cutting techniques to fell and remove limbs from trees.
- Be sure that bystanders are at a safe distance from cutting activities, the chain saw operator uses personal protective equipment, and workers follow safety guidelines.

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