Chainsaws – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT'S AT STAKE

Chainsaws are the ultimate power tools that hang in the arsenal of power tools that workers possess and use on a continual basis. It is incumbent on workers to remain aware and vigilant at all times for their safety when they are using chainsaws.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Chainsaws have caused catastrophic injuries, severe amputations and even death. **Common hazards** in chainsaw operations include:

- Amputation or death from kickback
- Crush injuries from trees falling or breaking under pressure
- Head injuries from falling branches
- Electrocution from branches hitting power lines
- Burns from hot points or refuelling hazards
- Overexertion

Incident example

- A worker suffered severe lacerations when the chainsaw he was operating kicked back, striking his leg.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Initial Chainsaw Safety Checklist

- Make sure you are familiar with the chainsaw and its safe use before you start.
- Make sure you are not fatigued or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE), including:
    - Chainsaw pants or chaps made of ballistic nylon to stop moving chains
    - Steel-toe boots
    - Hard hat (to protect against falling branches)
    - Safety eyewear with side shields or a face shield
    - Hearing protection

    - Work gloves with a grip surface
- Check that the chainsaw is in good operating order. Make sure the chain is sharp, has the correct tension, and that it is lubricated.

Planning

- Make sure you have a buddy.
- Check the area for power lines, buildings, vehicles, and loose branches overhead.
- Look to see if anyone else is in or around the work area.
- Only work in daylight.
- Make sure you have safe footing.
- Plan the fall direction, cuts, and escape routes.
- Plan for first aid and access to medical care.

Prevent kickbacks

Kickback occurs when the saw tip touches another object, or the blade is pinched. The saw is thrown back towards the user. A saw cutting at full throttle can kick back in one-tenth of a second – faster than a person can react.

- Always know where the bar tip is.
- Make sure that the nose of the blade will not strike another object.
- Use the top or bottom of the blade (not the nose) to start a cut.
- Make sure that the nose of the blade does not touch the bottom or side of the kerf during reinsertion.
- Make sure the depth gauges and tooth angles of the saw chain are set according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.

Limbing

- Check each limb before making a cut to make sure that cutting the limb won’t bind the saw or cause the trunk to roll toward you.
- Stand at an angle to the limb so that if the saw slips or completes the cut sooner than expected, the chain will not strike your leg.
- Hold the saw firmly with both hands.
- Watch for twigs that could snag the chain.
- Maintain a high saw speed when entering or leaving a cut in the wood.
- Never straddle the limb you are cutting.
- Keep the chain from hitting the ground.

Refuelling

- Refuel outdoors on the ground.
- Allow the engine to cool before refuelling.
- Extinguish all ignition sources (for example, cigarettes).
- Use only an approved gasoline container in good condition.
- Keep the nozzle in contact with the fuel tank.
- If you spill fuel on your clothing, change immediately.
- Never overfill the tank.
- Replace the cap and tighten it securely.

Responsibilities of Employers

- Maintain and repair chainsaws.

- Make sure workers are trained in the safe use of chainsaws before they start work.
- Demonstrate how to hold, use, and store the chainsaw.
- Demonstrate how the safety features work (for example, guards, shields, and automatic releases).
- Demonstrate how to lock out the equipment before clearing any jams or performing repairs or maintenance.
- Remind workers of the PPE they are required to wear.
- Provide adequate supervision after training.

FINAL WORD

Leadership of employers and supervisors in the correct procedures in chainsaw safety protocol is the most important factor in establishing in maintaining a safe work environment for chainsaw operations.