# 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.