Child Killed in Wood Chipper



A father who had brought his youngest son and two older children to work with him in Salem, CT, during school vacation suffered an unbearable loss when the six-year-old boy became caught in a wood chipper and was killed instantly.

The boy, Jeffrey Bourgeois, was trying to help his father, Scott, do some tree removal work when the tragedy occurred. The child was trying to feed a branch into the wood chipper when he became caught on the branch and was drawn into the machine.

“The little guy was apparently trying to help his dad. It’s a very tragic and difficult scene for everybody,” says Lt. J. Paul Vance of the Connecticut State Police.

Scott Bourgeois had his back turned to the boy at the time. Grief counselors were sent to the child’s school in Salem, CT, to help parents and students deal with the shock of Jeffrey’s death.

The US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) warns that chipper knives rotate at between 1,000 and 2,000 revolutions per minute and people need sufficient training before operating them.

Training should cover:

- Correct operation of the chipper and its safety controls,
- The manufacturer’s instructions on operation, inspection and maintenance of the chipper,
- Proper procedures for starting and shutting down a chipper, and
- Correct use and maintenance of PPE. Anyone operating a wood chipper should be wearing a hardhat, eye protection, hearing protection and safety shoes or work boots. If work gloves are worn, they need to be cinched tight to prevent tree limbs from catching on the gloves and possibly pulling a worker into an operating chipper.

One or more persons should be serving as safety watches near emergency shut-off devices while another worker feeds material into a chipper. Workers operating chippers should stand to the side of the in-feed chute, making it less likely that they will be caught and dragged into a chipper.

In addition, a wooden tool or long branch should be used to push material into feed rollers and branches should be placed into the chipper butt-end first,

according to OSHA.

Before attempting to clear a clogged chipper chute or change chipper blades, proper locking pins need to be used to immobilize the disc cutting wheel.