

Chain saw safety

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

Safeguards against injury while using a chain saw:

- Operate, adjust and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions provided in the manual
- 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 the 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 boots that cover the ankle.
- Always cut at waist level or below to ensure that you maintain secure control over the chain saw.
- Bystanders or coworkers should remain at least two tree lengths (at least 150 feet) away from anyone felling 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 and call for help. This act may save a life.

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 during a high wind. If the tree or the 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 seemingly small tree or branch (2 inches in diameter, for example) may pose a hazard when it is released from tension.

To avoid 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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