

Cutting with the Chainsaw

Following basic safety rules will allow you to enjoy your daily work. Going at a steady pace with your focus on safety will please you and your boss.

Follow basic safety practices:

- Never work alone.
- Always hold the saw with both hands.
- Operate the saw at full throttle at all times.
- Never cut above shoulder height.
- Do not cut with the toe of the guide bar.
- Keep the chain lubricated.
- If the chain loosens, stop the saw and adjust it.
- Use a scabbard or bar guard whenever the saw is not in use.
- Shut off the saw when carrying it more than a short distance.
- Carry the saw with the bar to the rear.
- Keep your work area clear of branches and other objects to avoid kickback.



Kickback

Kickback is the upward motion of the guide bar. It's sudden, unexpected, and dangerous. Guarding against kickback requires your special attention. Follow legislation and manufacturer's recommendations. Work with your co-workers to get the job done right and safe.

For more information, refer to current applicable Occupational Health and Safety Legislation.

The Alberta Construction Safety Association's mission is to provide quality advice and education for the construction industry that will reduce human suffering and financial costs associated with workplace incidents. This brochure is part of a series, **The Toolbox Brochures**, which are available on a variety of safety topics. If you have any questions or comments please contact:



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Chainsaws



Making Safety A Way Of Life



The Alberta Construction Safety Association

The “Amateur” at Home

Many people use chainsaws away from work to cut firewood or to take down a tree. This limited experience does not qualify us as experts in every situation.

If you're taking down a tree, ensure that there is room for the tree to fall.

If it gets caught on other trees, it can roll off the branches or snap them, trapping you, the “amateur.” Never work under a “hung up” tree.

Experts can better predict where a tree will fall and how the cut end will move off the stump. They know when to step aside. What looks easy often requires much practice and years of experience.

If you plan to cut a tree down at home:

- Notify the proper authorities so they can make sure you will not hit power lines, roads, or buildings.
- Determine in what direction the tree will fall and clear the area of debris.
- Warn family and others to stay well back from the entire area.
- Clear an escape path for the faller to the rear of the tree being felled, away from the direction of the fall.
- Other workers, except the faller, must remain at a distance of not less than the height of the tallest tree away from the area where the felling is taking place.



Protection and Prevention

As a wise worker, you know the limitations of the chainsaw. You also know that wearing the appropriate PPE might prevent an injury if a mistake has been made.

Occupational Health and Safety Legislation and manufacturer's specifications recommend protection for your head, ears, eyes, face, hands, legs, and feet.

Safety-wise workers and companies tackle safety from all angles. Wearing the right safety equipment, proper use and maintenance of chainsaws, and following safety procedures is the best way to ensure a good safety record all around.

Chainsaws in Construction

Chainsaws and other portable power tools are very useful in the construction industry. But in order to truly save time, effort, and money, chainsaws must always be operated safely, efficiently, and according to manufacturer's specifications.

Incidents involving chainsaws are frequent. Most injuries occur when the operator makes contact with the chain or when the object being cut falls on the operator. In many cases, these kinds of incidents can easily be avoided. Following all basic safety procedures will help reduce injuries.

Before You Start

Make sure you know all the operating procedures for the chainsaw you plan to use by reading the manufacturer's specifications. Find out the answers to any questions before you start. An unsure operator is an unsafe operator.

Inspect the saw carefully. Watch for:

- A dull chain
- A bent guide bar
- Loose nuts and bolts
- Cracked or worn housing
- Loose or broken handles
- Leaking gas or oil caps



Only use the chainsaw if it meets or exceeds manufacturer's specifications.

Safety for Starters

Review the starting procedures and controls for the model you are using. Be sure you are confident before you start it. Mix gasoline and engine oil according to manufacturer's recommendations. Do not fuel the saw if it is still hot from previous use.

Before starting:

- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Make sure the chain is sharp, undamaged, and that nothing is caught in the teeth or components.
- Make sure the chain is tight.

While starting:

- Hold the saw firmly on the ground with the chain away from your body and clear of any obstructions.
- Use a quick, sharp pulling motion on the starting cord.
- Hold the saw firmly with one foot on the footplate (bottom of rear handle) and one hand on the top handle (not the chain break).

Before use:

- When the saw is running, check to make sure it idles smoothly without the chain turning.
- If the saw runs rough or if the chain turns, stop the saw and adjust the idle and/or have it repaired.
- Then run the saw at top speed, without cutting. Kick in the chain break to make sure it works – if it doesn't kick in, have the saw repaired before using it.