Chainsaw Can Be Friend or Foe



Safety Talk

People who never touched a chainsaw before have been using these tools for disaster cleanup. So it’s time for a safety talk on the hazards of these tools.

The fact that it’s powered is why the chainsaw is a labor-saving device, of course – and it’s also the reason many operators get seriously hurt.

Although some chainsaws are electric, most have gasoline-powered, two-cycle motors. These saws have become lighter, faster and more powerful, increasing the hazard to users. Three main hazards are associated with chainsaw use: Noise, vibration and cuts.

Noise

When the ear is exposed to high levels of noise, such as those produced by a chainsaw, hearing loss occurs. This is permanent and worsens over time, but is easily preventable. Wear properly fitted ear plugs or muffs, preferably both.

Vibration

Over time, the vibration produced by a chainsaw can cause circulatory problems in your finger.

To prevent these conditions follow these tips:

- Make sure your saw has vibration dampening (rubber bushings between the handle and the motor section).
- Keep the saw sharp.
- Don’t hold the saw so tightly that your hands cramp.
- Keep warm during work.

Cuts

These are the most common injuries caused by chainsaws, ranging from minor hand injuries while filing the chain to major amputation from saw kickback.

Here are some guidelines for safe use of chainsaws:

- They must be operated with two hands. If one hand is removed to start a saw in mid-air, or for any other reason, the operator is not in control of the tool.

- Always start your saw on a surface that is as clear of debris, firm and level as possible.
- Adjust your saw so that when it is idling, the chain is stopped.
- If the saw is fitted with a chain brake, keep it in good working order. Never modify or remove a chain brake.
- Wear a hardhat, preferably with mounted face guard and hearing protection.
- Wear gloves when working with or fueling the saw, handling or changing the chain.
- Wear boots with good sole grips.
- Wear leg protectors.
- When carrying the saw, keep the chain bar to the rear. You won’t fall on the chain if you stumble and it’s less likely to get hung up in brush.

Make sure you read the operator’s manual and follow the instruction for safe use of a chainsaw. Your safety comes first, even in an emergency.