Chainsaw Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT’S AT STAKE

Based on the inherent danger of working with chainsaws, it’s vital that employees exposed to chainsaw operations be given the proper education and skills training so that they know how to work skillfully, keeping themselves and their co-workers safe.

WHAT’ S THE DANGER

1st RULE

Make sure you read the operator’s manual and follow the instruction for safe use of a chainsaw.

GENERAL

The high -power equipment with high-level cutters especially poses a great danger when operated recklessly, which is why it is important that an operator is knowledgeable of the tools and safety precautions regardless of experience.

MAIN HAZARDS

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.

HIGH – RISK CHAINSAW OPERATIONS

- Operating a chainsaw above ground level, such as in a tree or on a ladder
- Working on a steep slope or uneven ground
- Cutting trees known to split
- Working in inclement weather, such as heavy rain or extreme cold
- Working for long periods of time with no breaks

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEFORE STARTING A CHAINSAW

Prior to beginning the task of cutting, a chainsaw operator must do the following:

- Check controls, chain tension, and all bolts and handles to ensure they are functioning properly and adjusted according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Make sure the chain is sharp and the lubrication reservoir is full.
- Fuel a gasoline-powered saw at least 10 feet from any sources of ignition, and ensure that the fuel is a proper

mix of gas and oil based on the manufacturer’s specifications.
- Check the fuel container to ensure it is metal or plastic, does not exceed a 5-gallon capacity and is approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Be sure that gasoline-, electric- and battery-powered chainsaws are equipped with a protective device that minimizes chainsaw kickback.

HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES FOR SAFE USE OF CHAINSAWS:

- They must be operated with two hands.
- 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.
- 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.
- Read the entire operation manual before using any chainsaw. Always operate within the manufacturer’s guidelines.
- Do not alter any guards on the chainsaw.
- Do not operate a chainsaw on a ladder or any unstable surface.

FINAL WORD

Most workers can manage to start a chainsaw and cut something without incident. Today we have both electric- and battery-powered chainsaws that are easy to start. While it’s great that such advanced technology exists, this technology makes it simpler for workers to operate chainsaws without appropriate education or training about the tool or cutting trees.