

Chainsaws and Clearing

About 8 minutes to deliver

Kickback happens in the time it takes to flinch, and the tree you are cutting is rarely the thing that hits you.

A chainsaw chain runs at around sixty feet per second. Kickback throws the bar up and back toward your face faster than anyone can react to it, and it is caused by the top corner of the bar nose touching something.

KICKBACK

- Know where the nose is at all times. The upper quadrant of the tip is the kickback zone.
- Never cut with the tip, and watch for what the tip could touch behind or beside the cut — a branch, a second stem, the ground.
- Left thumb wrapped around the front handle, not laid along it. A wrapped thumb is what keeps the saw from rotating out of your hands.
- Stand to the side of the cutting line, never directly behind the bar.
- Chain brake on whenever you take a step, and start the saw on the ground with the brake engaged.

PPE THAT IS NOT OPTIONAL

Chaps or cut-resistant trousers, a helmet with a face screen, eye protection, hearing protection, gloves and boots. Chainsaw chaps are the single item that turns a career-ending leg injury into a ruined pair of trousers, and the most common excuse for not wearing them — "it's one quick cut" — is when most of these happen.

FELLING AND WHAT FALLS

The tree is usually not what hits people.

- Look up before every cut. Dead limbs — widow makers — come down when the trunk moves, and they arrive without a sound.
- Two escape routes, cleared, at roughly 45 degrees back from the fall line. Planned before the cut, not during it.
- Nobody within two tree lengths.
- Watch for spring poles and bound wood. A bent sapling or a limb under tension releases with enormous force the moment the fibres part.
- Never cut overhead, and never above shoulder height.

EVERYTHING ELSE

- Look for the line before you cut. Overhead conductors run through tree lines, and a limb bridging a conductor energises the tree.
- Chippers — feed from the side, never the centre, never push with a hand or a foot, and know where the feed bar is. Loose clothing and lanyards near a feed roller are how people go in.
- Fuel a cool saw, on the ground, away from where you will start it.
- Sharp chain, correct tension. A dull chain makes you push, and pushing is how the tip finds something.

ASK THE CREW

- Is anyone cutting today without chaps?
- What is overhead where we are clearing — limbs or conductors?
- Where are the escape routes for the next tree?

29 CFR 1910.266 · 29 CFR 1926.604 · 29 CFR 1910.132

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ATTENDANCE RECORD

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DateJob / site

Delivered byCompany

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I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

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