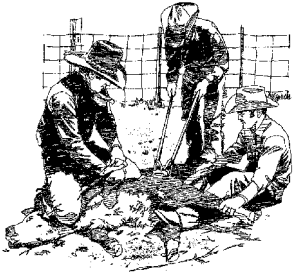


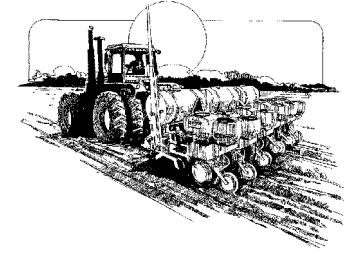
Agricultural Health and Safety

Fact Sheet AHS-04



Chainsaw Safety

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Chainsaws, like other types of equipment on the farm, provide valuable service, but they are inherently dangerous. The risks of operating chainsaws are obvious. What is less obvious is the fact that there are over a hundred causes of chainsaw injuries and deaths. By far the most common cause of chainsaw accidents is “kickback.” Kickback occurs when the cutting teeth on the chain or the chain itself catches or binds in the cut. Because the chain is moving at very high speeds, if the chain or teeth strike a hard substance, or get pinched in the cut, the whole saw will move with great force.

Controlling the saw becomes impossible, very often striking the operator and resulting in serious injuries, or death. Most saws in service today have safety features such as chain brakes, safety chains, and deadman switches. However, these improvements on their own are not enough to ensure the safety of the operator. To avoid kickback injuries the operator should:

- * Avoid cutting with the tip or upper quarter of the bar.
- * Use a tip guard that covers the end of the bar.
- * Operate the saw in the correct cutting position, stand at an angle to the saw so

that if a kickback were to occur the saw would miss your head and neck.

- * Keep both hands on the saw while cutting. Keep your left elbow stiff. This will help prevent the saw from striking you should it kickback.
- * Don't use a chainsaw to cut wood from old buildings, unless you are absolutely sure that all nails, screws, or other metal objects have been removed.

By strictly observing these five practices chainsaw operators can expect a sharp reduction in the risk of injury or death due to kickback. The risk of other common chainsaw and chainsaw-related accidents can also be reduced through the observation of safe practices, and common sense.

- * Know your saw. Take to time to read your owner's manual, learn your saw's capabilities and limitations, and maintain your saw for performance and safety.
- * Always operate chainsaws below shoulder height. Trying to cut over head is unstable.

- * Never work alone. Chainsaws are most often used in remote locations. Always take another person along who can help in case of an accident.
- * When felling trees always look for “widow-makers,” which are dead limbs high in the tree that can break off and strike the operator. Also plan escape routes in case the tree does not fall where expected.
- * Protect yourself. Always use hearing and eye protection, as well as protective chaps, shoes with steel toes, and heavy gloves.

Pertinent Literature

Chainsaws, Farm Safety Association, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

Consumer Product Safety Commission, Consumer Information Guide: Chain Saws, The Commission , 1980, p. 7.

Consumer Product Safety Commission, Overview of Chain Saw Related Injuries, The Commission, August, 1982, p. 11.

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