

Working Safely with Chainsaws

The chainsaw is one of the most efficient and productive portable power tools used in disaster response. It can also be one of the most dangerous. If you learn to operate it properly and maintain the saw in good working condition, you can avoid injury as well as be more productive.



Before Starting the Saw

- Check controls, chain tension, and all bolts and handles to ensure they are functioning properly and adjusted according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Fuel the saw at least 10 feet from any ignition source.
- Check the fuel container for the following requirements:
 - Must be metal or plastic.
 - Must not exceed a 5 gallon capacity.
 - Must be approved by the Underwriters Laboratory, Factory Mutual (FM), the Department of Transportation (DOT), or other nationally recognized testing laboratory.



Starting the Saw

- Make sure fuel and oil caps are on properly.
- Never "drop start" the saw.
- Place on a firm and clear surface with foot in handle or hold saw handle with knees. Adjust choke as needed.



While Running the Saw

- Keep hands on the handles and maintain secure footing while operating the chainsaw.
- Clear the area of obstacles that might interfere with cutting the tree or using the retreat path.
- Do not cut directly overhead.

- Shut off or engage the chain brake whenever the saw is carried, especially across hazardous terrain.
- Be prepared for kickback. Use saws that reduce kickback danger (chain brakes, low kickback chains, guide bars, etc.).

Personal Protective Equipment

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is designed to prevent or lessen the severity of injuries to workers using chainsaws.
- PPE must be inspected prior to use on each work shift to ensure it is in serviceable condition.
- The following PPE must be used when operating a chainsaw:
 - Head Protection
 - Ear Protection
 - Eye Protection
 - Chaps
 - Foot Protection (at least boots)
 - Gloves



Team Leaders

Team leaders involved in chainsaw work should:

- Understand they will not operate the chainsaw.
- Work to ensure that their volunteers are able to safely perform their assigned tasks. (When workers are trained to work safely, they should be able to anticipate and avoid injury from the job related hazards they may encounter).
- Know how to safely use, operate, and maintain tools, machines, and equipment the volunteers will be allowed to utilize in completing their assignments.

This is one in a series of Volunteer Safety Information Fact Sheets highlighting Samaritan's Purse North American Ministries programs, policies, or standards.

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