



Safety Tips for Chain Saw Operators

Whether you're cutting down a tree too close to the road or clearing a limb that fell across the roadway during a storm, local agency road crews must make safety a top priority. Here are some safety tips from a professional tree feller:

- ✓ **Become familiar with the chain saw and keep it in optimum condition.** Know how your chain saw works, what it sounds and feels like, and what it's designed to do. Be sure the chain saw is properly sharpened and tensioned, and if it's not performing properly, get it adjusted or repaired. "A dull saw chain means more work pushing and often pulling on a saw to get the task accomplished," says Tim Ard of Forest Applications Training, Inc. "Workers fatigue, their productivity is reduced, and most importantly safety is compromised."
- ✓ **Wear personal protective equipment.** Workers should always wear safety goggles, a hard hat, earplugs, and closed, protective shoes when operating a chain saw. Nonslip gloves are also recommended.
- ✓ **Learn how to sight to place the tree where you want it.** An operator should use the felling sights on the chain saw to aim the tree's fall. Stand behind the sight line, and aim the tree toward the target before you start the face notch cut.
- ✓ **Keep the wood hinge attached to the falling tree.** The hinge provides the cutter extra reaction time and control in a variety of sawing scenarios. "Many incidents, fatalities, and injuries occur when saw operators cut the hinge off and stay with the tree too long as it falls," Ard says.
- ✓ **Plan an escape route.** Developing an effective retreat route involves clearing debris and other obstacles in the area, removing low-level branches, preparing an escape path opposite the direction of the fall and at a 45-degree angle, and then using it. "Injuries and fatalities are often caused because saw operators or onlookers are not far enough away from the stump of the tree when the tree or its limbs are falling," Ard says. "Plan your retreat path thoroughly."



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