

Chainsaw Safety Critical Part of Storm Cleanup

Spring storms often bring out the chainsaws from professionals, homeowners and landowners. Stay safe by reading the chainsaw manual and wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment. Here are six tips a homeowner or landowner should consider.



1) **If you have not been trained, you cannot fell a tree safely!** Many YouTube videos contain mistakes in tree felling when the person is nervous but safe and perhaps regretful about the property damage that resulted. These people narrowly escape serious injury often without a real recognition of it. Manufacturers, distributors and dealers as well as professional arborists and loggers offer training in your area. Attending one of these will reward you with safe operation and the extended life of the tool.

2) **Don't operate the saw without the proper safety gear.** It is tempting to say that you only have this one cut to make so why should you put on all this gear. One cut is all it takes to send you to the emergency room. The same power that makes the tool so useful is what makes it so dangerous.

3) **Understand kickback forces.** Kickback forces are generated when the upper corner of the bar tip contacts an object. Contact in this area causes the saw bar to move violently, and chainsaw cuts to the head, shoulders, hands, legs and feet are related to kickback reaction. If you understand how kickback forces are generated, you can handle the saw in ways that greatly reduce kickback.

4) **Don't operate the saw when you are tired.** You can rake leaves or push a mower all day long. If you make an error because you are tired, it is no big deal. An error with the saw can be deadly. In addition if you are wearing the proper gear, you are likely to get hot and dehydrated even faster.

5) **Understand compression and tension forces in wood.** On a tree that fell or broke, the stem and branches have reacted to the weight pushing down and the ground or logs below that support it. In a branch that is bent, the inside of the bend has compression forces that can pinch the bar if sawn into. The outside of the bend is under tension and cutting into it can release explosive forces when the operator could be injured by the branch or the saw. Because the tree might slide as it falls, it may not be easy to distinguish compression from tension.

6) **Keep both feet on the ground, both hands on the saw, and the saw bar below your shoulders.** Professional tree services and arborists have training and equipment that enables them to cut branches from standing trees. Leaning a ladder against a tree to cut a limb can be disastrous for the novice. Working from a ladder adds all the hazards of operating a saw to the hazard of falling, which produces injuries just as serious as the saw and the tree.