

MAFES Dawg Tracks



September 8, 2008

Safety Tips: Chain Saw Safety



Well, it probably doesn't feel like it now, but fall isn't too far off, followed by a few winter months. A lot of us are getting "itchy" to get into the woods to get ready for hunting season. For me, I'll have to wait for a good frost to get the "shoulderless men" in hibernation for the winter. However, I'm sure I'll be in the minority, as most hunters will be ready to start food plots, brushing blinds, etc. With all this preparation, the chainsaw will be out and ready for the junior Paul Bunyans.

Chain saws are very useful and time saving, but they also can be unforgiving and lethal in the hands of an unskilled or careless operator, causing the possibility of a serious accident or a debilitating injury. In most cases, the saw is not the reason for the accident, but the environment that it is being used. In 1998, the Consumer Products Safety Commission published this statistic that there were more than 33,000 chain saw related accidents in that year.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT -

OSHA's regulation #1910.266 says they require the following equipment when using a chainsaw.

- Helmet system with head, face and hearing protection
- Cotton or leather gloves
- Protective chaps or protective pants (UL approved)
- Protective work boots with steel toes or caps

All these items can be found at a chainsaw dealer and probably Wal-Mart.

OTHER SAFETY TIPS -

- Study and be familiar with the owner's instruction manual.
- Use a reduced kickback bar, low kickback chain, and chain brake.
- Avoid any contact with the bar tip and any object.
- Hold the saw firmly with both hands.
- Do not over reach and do not cut above shoulder height.
- Check the chain brake frequently.
- Follow the instruction manual for sharpening and maintenance instructions.

CHAINSAW SAFETY FEATURES THAT YOU NEED -

- Chain brake (manual or inertia)
- Working safety throttle switch
- Chain catcher
- Working on/off switch
- Spark arrester
- Proper carburetor adjustment (performed by trained service technician)

- When the saw runs out of fuel, allow the engine to cool down for 25 or 30 minutes before refueling.
- Do not smoke when you are refueling.
- It's a good idea to have an extra chain or two, in case you let the blade hit metal or concrete while working.
- Always carry the saw with the engine off.

ACTUAL WOOD CUTTING SAFETY TIPS & HAZARDS TO BE AWARE OF -

- Broken or hanging limbs, attached vines or a dead tree that is leaning.
- Cutting a dead tree, be careful as the top could fall out and injure or kill you.
- If the tree is broken and under pressure, make sure you know which way the pressure is going. If you aren't sure of the pressure, make small intermittent cuts to allow the pressure to gradually release.
- Be careful with young trees that other trees have fallen on. They act like spring poles and may propel the chainsaw back into your leg.
- A downed tree can weigh several tons and can easily injure or kill an unaware chainsaw operator. (More injuries occur in the cleanup than in the actual hurricane or tornado.)
- When cutting a downed tree, use a plastic wedge to keep the saw from binding up.
- Do not cut alone. Most accidents happen in the late afternoon when you are more fatigued or when you are trying to finish after a long day. It's a good practice to have a partner, but not kids or dogs.
- Always cut from the ground. Do not use a ladder or climb up a tree to cut.
- When you are felling or downing the tree, make sure the area is clear of people and pets.
- Before you start to fell a tree, look around the area and establish yourself an escape route.
- When you are moving heavy wood pieces (after cutting) get yourself some helpers. Don't attempt to move heavy timber alone.

As mentioned above, chainsaw cutting can be very hazardous. I believe if you only follow the tips discussed above, you shall find that chainsaw cutting can be fun and some of the threats of injury will be reduced and/or eliminated.

**WEAR GOOD SAFETY SHOES -
IT LETS YOU KEEP A GOOD
FOOTING ON LIFE!**

WORK SAFELY-

DON'T MAKE A TRIP TO HEAVEN EARLY!