



# SHIFT BRIEFING



## CHAINSAW BEST PRACTICES

Paragraph 1 A chain saw is a powerful cutting machine. Improperly used, a chainsaw can inflict serious injury. Used properly, it will trim or cut down trees, clear land, or cut fireplace wood. A chainsaw operator, who takes shortcuts and ignores recommended procedures, cannot escape injury for long. Approximately 23,000 persons annually require emergency room treatment for chain saw injuries. *Discuss your injury / near-miss experience.*

No one would intentionally risk contact with a moving chainsaw blade. Yet, because an operator fails to follow recommended operating procedures, two of every three serious chainsaw injuries entail inadvertent direct contact with the blade. These accidents may involve an operator reaching across or holding work near the moving saw, losing saw control through loss of footing, turning suddenly, climbing above ground level, losing balance, shifting chain saw weight while cutting at or above waist level, or experiencing chain saw kickback.

**Test the chain brake before you use the saw each day.** Keep the entire saw cleaned. Clean the bar grooves, fins, air filter, muffler, and hand grips regularly. Inspect the entire unit regularly. Replace damaged or worn parts, or report deficiencies to the mechanic. Proper maintenance is essential to safe saw operation. Follow the owner's manual recommendations for routine maintenance. Explain your chain sharpening and other maintenance policies and procedures.

Chain tension should be adjusted initially and periodically during the job to ensure quick, smooth cutting and prolonging the chain's life. Too loose a chain will derail with potentially disastrous results. Too tight a chain will bind. Follow your owner's manual instructions to adjust chain tension.

*Demonstrate how to determine and adjust proper chain tension for your brand of saw.*

Proper lubrication will also help prolong the chain's life. When using a saw with a manual chain oiler, pump the oiler frequently while cutting. Periodically, stop the engine, disconnect the spark plug wire, and pump the oiler while pulling the saw chain around with a gloved hand. This will ensure even oiling of the chain. On saws with automatic chain oilers, adjust the oiler properly so it does not over or under-oil. Check and refill the bar oil reservoir when refueling.

*Discuss where to get bar oil and demonstrate how to check and refill the oil reservoir.*

Wear warm, comfortable, trim-fitting clothing that allows easy movement without causing you to perspire heavily. Protective clothing and equipment include heavy leather or Kevlar work gloves, heavy non-slip work boots (preferably steel-toed), ballistic nylon or Kevlar leg chaps, and protective eyewear and hearing protection.

**Review your Hazard Assessment and PPE policies for chain saw use.**

**Additional tips for chain saw care include:**

1. Use a chain guard, scabbard, or chain saw case when transporting a saw to protect you and your saw. Carry the saw with the blade pointing behind you.
2. Always cut with both hands on the saw. For right-handed saws (most all saws are right-handed), the right hand is on the trigger, and the left hand is on the bar.
3. Cut at a level below your shoulders. When cutting on the ground, protective chaps must be worn.
4. Using a chain saw is a two-person operation. There must be a person monitoring the operator.

**5. *Discuss additional policies or procedures for your agency.***