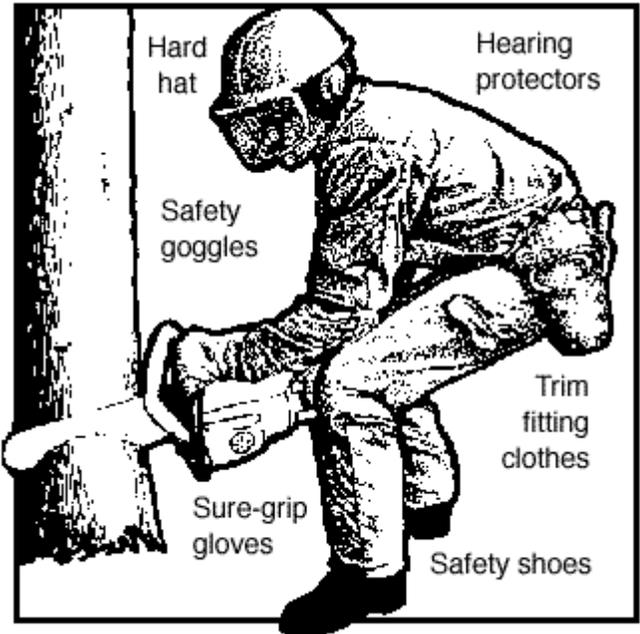
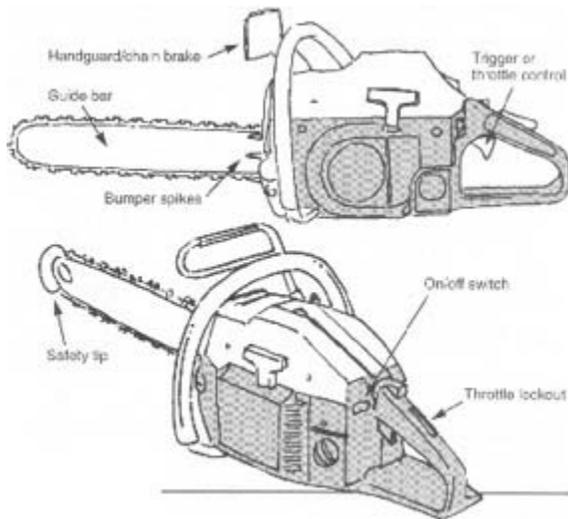


# Basic Chain Saw Safety Tips

Agricultural Engineering Extension: Karen Funkenbusch, Research Associate  
W. Downs, Extension Agricultural Engineer

## Using a chain saw can be dangerous



- Chain saws can save you a lot of time and work. But they are potentially dangerous.
- Many chain saw accidents happen because users don't understand the saw's hazards, or don't carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- One of the biggest hazards of chain saws is kickback. This often occurs when the nose or tip of the guide bar comes into contact with an object such as a rock, log or branch. The guide bar abruptly kicks up and back toward the operator - causing the person to lose control of the saw.

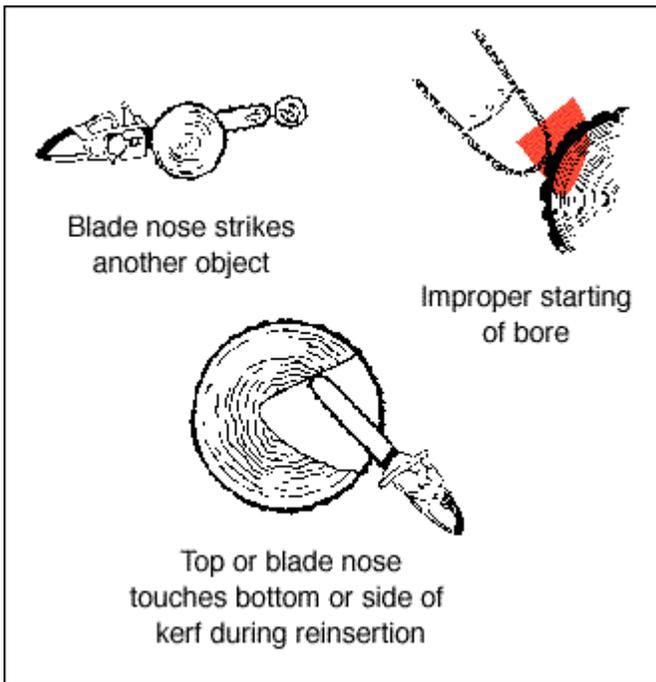
## Before you begin to use a chain saw:

- Carefully read the manufacturer's instructions.
- Become familiar with the chain saw you will be using and its safety features.
- Be sure you are in good mental and physical condition. Operating while you are tired or sick may alter your judgment and/or reflexes.

- Check your clothing. Don't operate a chain saw while wearing loose fitting clothing, jewelry, a scarf, cuffed pants or anything else that could become entangled in the saw. Tie back long hair.
- Always wear proper protective equipment. This should include heavy-duty gloves with a good grip, sturdy shoes or boots with non-slip soles, head, eye and hearing protection, and leg protection such as chain saw chaps.

## Check the work area around you and make sure that:

- There are no people or animals in the immediate area.
- The ground is free of obstacles such as rocks, stumps, holes, and wet or otherwise slippery brush.
- You can get a firm footing on the ground.
- You know which way the tree will fall if you are felling a tree, and you have a safe way out of the area.



- Don't cut with the chain saw between your legs or straddle the limb you will be cutting.
- Be alert for springback when cutting a limb under tension so you are not hit when the tension in the wood fibers is released.
- Be alert of dead branches or other debris hanging above you from a just felled tree. These are called widowmakers and for a good reason.
- Keep the chain saw and its handles clean and dry.
- Wipe up spilled fuel and oil after refueling.
- Properly maintain the chain saw and its safety equipment.
- Don't try to repair a chain saw yourself. This takes a trained chain saw service technician.
- Always have a first aid kit and a way to communicate with others handy.

## Reduce the chances of kickback:

- Keep a firm grip on the chain saw with both hands and plant both feet firmly on the ground.
- Keep an eye on the tip of the guide bar to make sure it doesn't come into contact with another object.
- Saw below shoulder height, and don't overreach.
- Saw with the engine at full throttle.
- Don't cut with the nose or tip of the guide bar.
- Don't stand directly behind the saw. Stand slightly to the left of the guide bar.

## Additional safety tips:

- Make sure your chain saw is in good working condition at all times. The chain should be sharp and the tension properly adjusted.
- Don't remove the chain saw's safety equipment.
- Turn the engine off before you put your chain saw down or carry it.

For additional information, see  
MU Guide Sheets:

G1958 Felling, Bucking and Limbing Trees  
G1959, Basic Chain Saw Safety and Use.

Your operator's manual will also give guidelines on  
safe and efficient operation.

Contact your local Outreach and Extension Center  
or the MU Extension Rural Safety & Health  
Program at:  
1.800.995.8503.

---

University Outreach and Extension does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran in employment or programs.

---

