

## CHAINSAW SAFETY GUIDE

Version	Date	Comments
1	October, 2008	Initial <i>Chainsaw Safety Guide</i>
2	March, 2009	Routine review
3	September, 2011	Routine review
4	May, 2015	Routine review

### A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Guide is to provide information regarding required training, proper use, and maintenance of chainsaws. This Guide is based upon Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard 29 CFR 1910.266: *Logging operations* and other OSHA publications.

### B. SCOPE

This Guide applies to all George Mason University employees who operate a chainsaw as a part of their job activities.

### C. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Attend *Chainsaw Safety Training*. Training is required one time and whenever an employee is assigned a new job task for which they have not received training or the supervisor or EHS deem it necessary.
- Refer to the owner's manual for manufacturer's operating instructions and safety information.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that each chainsaw operator receives and wears proper personal protective equipment.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees receive required training prior to using a chainsaw.

### D. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Training requirements include:

- Specific work practices and procedures to include the recognition, prevention, and control of health and safety hazards.
- Safe operation, inspection, and maintenance of a chainsaw.

The following Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be used when operating a chainsaw:

- Eye/Face Protection (safety glasses and face shield)

- Leg Protection (cut resistant chaps)
- Foot Protection (cut resistant, steel toe boots)
- Hearing Protection (ear muffs or ear plugs)
- Hand Protection (cut resistant gloves)

The following PPE may be required depending upon job hazards:

- Head Protection (hard hat class A is only required when a danger from falling objects is present)

## **E. SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

- First-aid kits must be readily available at each work site.
- Wear appropriate clothing that fits correctly and is free of loose material. Confine loose clothing, long hair, or jewelry that can become caught in moving parts.
- Inspect chainsaw controls, bolts, and handles and adjust according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Inspect the chainsaw for loose, damaged, or broken parts as well as nicks or dents to the bar. If defective, remove from service and tag "Out of Service, Do Not Use".
- Maintain a properly sharpened chain and chain tension.
- Check the chain to make sure it does not move when the engine is idling and adjust as necessary.

## **F. CHAINSAW OPERATION**

### ***General:***

- Remove nails, screws, bolts, and other foreign objects from the piece prior to beginning the cut.
- Ensure chain brake is in place and operational.
- Keep observers at a safe distance away from the work area.
- Start the chainsaw by placing it on the ground and stabilize it with one hand. Pull the starter cord with your free hand. Never start a chainsaw in midair.
- Maintain secure footing while operating a chainsaw.
- Maintain a firm, two-handed grip of the chainsaw by:
  - Grasping the forward handle, palm down;
  - Wrapping fingers around the handle bar and keeping it between the index finger and thumb; and
  - Firmly grasping the rear handle and keep the arm holding the chainsaw stiff at the elbow to reduce operator fatigue and to maintain control of the chainsaw.
- Never stand directly behind a cut. Stand at an angle to the chainsaw.
- Be prepared for kickback and brace or position yourself accordingly.
- Saw only with the bottom part of the chain, nearest the engine, with the work against the saw or saw bumper.
- If a chainsaw stalls mid-cut, remove the saw blade before attempting to restart the chainsaw.

- Shut off and engage the chain brake whenever the chainsaw is to be carried more than 50 feet, or across hazardous terrain.
- Use extreme caution when cutting small brush and saplings to avoid the material getting caught in the chain.
- Avoid letting the chainsaw blade touch the ground as this will immediately dull the blade.

***Logging:***

- Clear the area of obstacles that could interfere with cutting the tree or the retreat path.
- Consider the terrain and surroundings before starting a cut. Traffic, overhead lines, and natural features such as streams and new growth woods should be protected from damage.
- Identify the fall path of the tree or branch and mark it off to prevent pedestrians, bystanders, or employees from entering the fall zone. No person should be allowed within two tree lengths of the person felling the tree.
- When cutting limbs from a felled tree, stand on the opposite side of the tree trunk.
- Avoid cutting tree limbs above mid-chest height except with a pole-saw.
- Do not cut directly overhead.
- Remove any broken or dead limbs that could fall before cutting the tree.
- Trees may have internal tension that could cause them to spring when cut.
- Cut spring poles or branches from the underside.
- A backcut and an undercut must be used when felling a tree.
- Use extreme caution during adverse weather conditions such as rain, snow, and wind as footing may become precarious. Trees and branches may be loaded by precipitation or wind and react unpredictably.
- If a retreat is required to avoid injury, shut off or release the throttle prior to retreating.

**G. REFUELING**

- Fuel containers must meet the following requirements:
  - It must be constructed of metal;
  - It must not exceed a five (5) gallon capacity; and
  - It must be approved by the Underwriters Laboratory (UL), Factory Mutual (FM), the Department of Transportation (DOT), or other Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory.
- Fuel the chainsaw at least 10 feet from sources of ignition in an open well ventilated area.
- The engine must be stopped and cool prior to fueling.
- Spills must be properly contained and cleaned up.

The information contained in this Guide is not inclusive of all OSHA regulations. Please contact Environmental Health and Safety Office at (703) 993-8448 or visit [www.OSHA.gov](http://www.OSHA.gov) for more information regarding workplace hazards, safety precautions, and regulations.