

Chainsaw Safety

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Spring Clean Up & Chainsaw Safety

Mother nature certainly did not show us any mercy this past winter and now that spring is here and the snow has melted, it is time to clean up the mess she left behind. Throughout most of the state, the ice storm in December caused a number of tree limbs to come down and in some areas caused entire trees to fall. The following are some safety reminders to consider while cleaning up this spring.

- Wear long sleeve shirts, pants and gloves when handling tree limbs to help prevent splinters and to limit exposure to poison oak/ivy/sumac.
- Do not attempt to lift large limbs by yourself. Trim the limb into smaller pieces that are easier to handle or ask a co-worker for assistance. Lifting or dragging large limbs can lead to a painful back strain.
- Choose the right chainsaw. Depending on the type of work you need to do, the diameter size of the trees you need to trim, different size saws may be necessary. Make sure you have training on each type of saw before you operate.
- Make sure you have training on the type of cutting you plan to do. Small trees, large trees and limbs will all require a different type of cut. Notching, plunging, sectional cutting and the use of wedges can be extremely hazardous to those less experienced.
- If an electric or utility line is overhead, do not cut in this area unless there is no chance of interference. Especially if trees are wet. Assume all lines are energized! In some areas, qualified high-tension linesmen are required to be present.
- Before starting your chainsaw check the controls, chain tension, handles and bolts to ensure they are all working properly. Inspect the equipment for deterioration and wear and tear
- Equip yourself with proper protective clothing and equipment. Safety goggles, hearing protection, hardhat, steel-toed shoes, gloves and close-fitting clothing should be used. Chainsaw chaps should also be used. Inspect PPE prior to use.
- Always start the chainsaw on a stable surface, not in mid air. Do not force a chainsaw to cut; depending on the hardness of the wood and the sharpness of the chain, it could cut slower in some situations.
- Always be prepared to react to kickback and plan a safe, unobstructed path of retreat before cutting. Take a moment to consider what could go wrong if a limb does not fall as you intended. Is there a potential for released tension on a limb? Could the top of the tree fall off?
- Determine the best possible fell direction that will not create other hazards or make clean up more difficult.
- To prevent kickback-keep your saw teeth sharp and even, maintain a firm hold on the saw, keep the tip guard in place when possible, and use a saw with a chain brake or kickback guard.
- When sharpening teeth, ensure equal number of strokes for each tooth. If filing the "rakes" ensure they are at the same height (and not too low) to prevent kickback.
- Always cut below shoulder height.
- Always avoid making cuts with the saw between your legs, cut with the saw to the outside of your legs. Never straddle a limb you plan to cut.
- Position yourself and others out of line with the chain if it were to break.
- Shut off the chainsaw when walking.
- Store and transport chainsaws with the chain guard in place in a dry area.

-Never work alone. Have a first aid kit and cell phone available at all times.