CrewSigned

Chainsaw Safety Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

A chainsaw cuts through a leg as easily as a log, and it does it in a fraction of a second. Most chainsaw injuries are to the legs, hands and face, and most of them come from kickback, from cutting in a bad position, or from a branch or trunk that moved in a way nobody expected. Today we will cover how to run a saw so that does not happen.

Gear up before you touch the saw. That means chaps or pants made with cut-resistant material that cover your legs from the thigh down, a hard hat, eye protection with a face screen, hearing protection, heavy gloves and sturdy boots. Cut-resistant chaps work by jamming the chain with fibers, so they only help if you wear them every time.

Check the saw. The chain should be sharp and tensioned, the chain brake and throttle lock should work, and the chain catcher and guards should be in place. Fuel it at least ten feet from anything that could ignite it, with the engine off. Wipe up spills before you start.

Start it on the ground or braced firmly, with the chain brake on. Never drop start a saw by throwing it down while pulling the cord. When you carry it more than a short distance, set the chain brake or shut it off, and carry it with the bar pointing back.

Kickback happens when the upper tip of the bar touches wood or something else, and the saw jumps back at your face. Keep the tip clear. Hold the saw with both hands, thumbs wrapped around the handles. Stand to the side of the cutting line, not behind it. Do not cut above your shoulders, and do not cut directly overhead. Cut at full throttle and let the saw do the work.

Watch the wood. Limbs and trunks under tension can spring back when you cut them. Look for loose branches above you before you start. When felling, plan the direction of fall, clear two escape routes, and keep everyone at least two tree lengths away.

Fatigue causes mistakes. Take breaks, drink water and stop when your hands are tired. If anything feels wrong, shut it off and ask.

Discussion questions

1. Where is the kickback zone on the bar, and how do you keep it from touching wood?
2. What would you check on this saw before you start it today?
3. Before we drop or limb this tree, where does everyone stand and where is the escape path?

OSHA standard

29 CFR 1910.266, Logging operations (chain saw rules)
https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.266

SOURCES

OSHA Tree Care Industry: https://www.osha.gov/tree-care
29 CFR 1910.266, Logging operations: https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.266

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC

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COMPANY

JOB / SITE

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TIME

PRESENTER

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