



Safety Alert

Safe Use of Chainsaws

20 February 2023

The following pages of this safety alert were issued by:

Ainsty Timber Marketing Ltd

Reference	Safe use of chainsaws
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Introduction

A recent incident involving an employee sustaining lacerations to a finger and thumb on his left hand from a chainsaw during de-vegetation and crown raising operations, has highlighted the importance of following machinery training and best practice guidance.

The incident occurred when a trained NPTC Chainsaw operative performing a planned task, selected the wrong tool for the task and used a chainsaw outside of the training and manufactures guidance, resulting in the injury. The use of a polesaw may have prevented the incident from occurring due to the nature of the works.

Selection and use of the right

Chainsaws



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Polesaws



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chainsaws should only be used on vegetation that is easily accessible from the ground with a two-handed grip, without raising the chainsaw above shoulder height. Operators should keep close to the saw – this will also reduce the risk of kick-back. It is important operators work to the limits and restriction of their training, for example “NPTC ground based chainsaw” works is to a limit of branch or trunk diameter of 380mm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polesaws should be used when the vegetation to be cut cannot be reached by standard size handheld tools and machinery. Using a polesaw allows the operative to position themselves safely, away from the “drop zone” of the vegetation being cleared. When using polesaws, the unit can put additional strain on the operator’s lower back, due to the length of the machine, this can be combated with work rotation of suitably trained operatives. |
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Planning

Chainsaw operations are extremely hazardous, and it is crucial that only properly trained operatives use chainsaws and other powered tools. Planning is as important as knowing how to use the chainsaw:

- Operatives must have appropriate training and competency to perform the work safely, including recognised training for the machines they are to use
- All high-risk tasks should be adequately supervised by a competent individual
- Only use a chainsaw if you are wearing ALL the appropriate protective equipment
- Carry your personal first aid kit with you and, it is fully stocked
- Make sure you understand and follow the controls and guidance set out in your briefings onsite, this includes your daily and Method Statement briefings
- Completing a daily onsite briefing and giving it the proper attention can help identify hazards and ways to improve safety onsite
- Inspect the vegetation being cut, ensure the working area is free from any items that could damage to the chain or cause a hazard to you or others. It is important the vegetation being cut is continuously monitored and assessed to ensure the right tool is being used for the task at hand.
- Maintain a good footing at the work area, and always have a clear escape route in the event anything goes wrong.
- Plan and be aware of the position of your body and equipment in relation to operation of the saw and a potential 'kickback' arc
- Do not operate the saw above shoulder height and always maintain a good grip with both hands
- Check your PPE, tools and equipment are in good working order to complete the task ahead. This includes deadman switches and safety cut-off devices.

Onsite

It is important every person onsite has the right and responsibility to highlight any potential hazard onsite and if necessary, call a stop to works.

- Before attempting any task ensure you have and use the right tool for the job
- Things can change onsite. If there is something stopping you doing the job safely, stop and raise this issue with your supervisor or manager.
- Maintain safe distances from anyone operating chainsaws, take into account the felling area / drop zone
- If you approached by the public or another person onsite, stop the moment you become aware of their presence
- Encourage each other to challenge working practices, Remember STOP. THINK SAFETY

Relevant PPE Standards

Safety helmet to EN 397. It is recommended that arborists working from a rope and harness use a mountaineering style helmet.

Hearing protection to EN 352-1.

Eye protection: Mesh visors to EN 1731 or safety glasses to EN 166.



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Gloves: The use of appropriate gloves is recommended under most circumstances. The type of glove will depend on a risk assessment of the task and machine. Consider the need for protection from cuts from the chainsaw, thorny material and cold/wet conditions. Where chainsaw gloves are required these need to be to **EN 381-7**.

Leg protection to EN 381-5. (All-round protection is recommended for arborists working in trees and occasional users, such as those working in agriculture.)

Chainsaw boots to BS EN ISO 20345:2004 and bearing a shield depicting a chainsaw to show compliance with **EN 381-3**. (For occasional users working on even ground where there is little risk of tripping or snagging on undergrowth or brash, protective gaiters conforming to **EN 381-9** may be worn in combination with steel-toe-capped safety boots.)



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Upper body protection: Chainsaw jackets to BS EN 381-11. Chainsaw jackets can provide additional protection where operators are at increased risk (eg trainees, unavoidable use of a chainsaw above chest height).

However, this needs to be weighed against increased heat stress generated by physical exertion (eg working from a rope and harness).

Upper body protection is optional and not considered mandatory.

Note: No protective equipment can ensure 100% protection against cutting by a hand-held chainsaw.

First Aid

When planning tasks with a potential of increased severity of injuries, it is important to ensure the operatives working on these tasks are properly kitted out. This includes ensuring they have the right first aid kit and contents.

A suitably stocked first-aid box, must include the items below;

- 1 x Saline (20ml) eye wash
- 10 x Assorted Plasters (Sterile)
- 6 x Safety Pins or Microfibre tape
- 1 x HSE Large Dressing
- 1x Gloves (pair)
- 2 x Sterile Wipes
- 1 x Triangular Bandage
- 3 X Trauma Bandages – various sizes



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It is best practice that operatives working within high-risk tasks are trained in emergency first aid. Anyone working with chainsaws should be trained in emergency first aid, and in particular how to control major bleeding and deal with crush injuries. In remote sites, people who have been injured may also be at risk of hypothermia. Make sure operators always carry a personal first-aid kit (incorporating a large wound dressing) with them and have reasonable access to a more comprehensive kit. See HSE's web pages on first aid at work (www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid).

Name	Date	Signature