Chain Saw Safety

Operating a chain saw can be hazardous. According to the New York State Department of Transportation, these are the safety procedures that should be followed when operating a chain saw.

The potential for injury can be minimized by use of proper personal protective equipment and safe operating procedures. This document addresses safe operating procedures for chain saw work. However, anyone attempting to operate a chain saw should always refer to manufacturers' safety manuals.

Chain saw operators should be trained in the safe operation and maintenance of chain saws as well as CPR and First Aid training. For all operations involving the use of chain saws, it is strongly recommended that at least two people be knowledgeable in First Aid and CPR. Operators should follow all manufacturer safety procedures. All appropriate personal protective equipment should be used, including hard hat, chaps, and eye, face, foot, hand and hearing protection.

Equipment
Chain saws should be equipped with at least two separate anti-kick back features. Chain brake, low kick back chain, reduced kick back bar, or nose guard are among current devices available.

Personal Protective Equipment
- Hard Hat
- Chaps – leg protection apparel constructed of cut resistant material.
- Foot Protection
- Hearing Protection – any muff, plug or semi-aural protectors that can be properly worn with other required personal protective equipment.
- Face Shield – wire mesh or clear plastic designed for impact protection.
- Safety Glasses – should have side shields and be designed for impact protection.
- Hand Protection – appropriate gloves should be worn, when possible.

Fueling and Starting
- Store and carry gasoline in safety cans.
- Use a funnel or flexible hose fitted to the container when fueling saws.
- Clear the area around fueling site of flammable material.
- Do not fuel the saw with engine running.
- Do not start the saw in the same spot where it is fueled.
- Allow engine to cool before refueling.
- After fueling wipe chain saw clean before restarting.
- Keep a fire extinguisher available when refueling.
- Place saw on the ground or other firm surface to start. Make sure chain can not contact ground or other objects.

General Safety Tips
- Never work alone with a chain saw.
- Never remove nose guard or chain brake.
- Chain brake must be engaged while starting.

- Keep engine free of saw dust.
- Clear away brush, rocks, fencing, etc. in the work area which might hinder movement.
- Always establish good footing.
- Keep others clear from areas of falling trees or rolling logs.
- Be alert for nails, wire, metal taps, etc. in trees.
- Keep cutting speed under control to avoid cutting too deep or at an improper angle.
- When moving with a saw, it should be grasped firmly in one hand and carried at the side with the bar pointing backwards. Special caution is necessary when the engine is running. The chain brake should be engaged during transport.
- Always look to the side before turning around. Face and hearing protection and engine noise will limit the operator's ability to know if someone is close.
- Stop the saw when doubtful about safety.
- Secured racks, boxes, bar holsters or sheathing, or other means should be used for transporting chain saws.
- A First Aid kit should always be immediately available.