

TOOLBOX TALK

BRIEFKIT

Brushcutter & Clearing Saw

A ready-to-deliver toolbox talk for foremen and supervisors. 8-10 minute spoken script plus briefing register for operative sign-in.

REFERENCE	TBT-BRUSHCUTTER-SAFETY-001	DURATION	8-10 minutes
DATE		SITE	
TRAINER (PRINT)		SIGNATURE	

1 Why it matters

Brushcutters and clearing saws sit under the same duties as any work equipment: trained and competent operators, the right guarding, and PPE that matches the risk. The big difference from a chainsaw is reach, a brushcutter can hurt someone standing a long way off through thrown debris, so the exclusion zone is as important as anything the operator wears. Vibration also applies, the same Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 limits as the saw.

2 PPE required for this task

Helmet / face screen for the operator

Leg protection appropriate to the cutting head

Hi-vis on public-facing and roadside work

Mesh visor PLUS safety glasses when running cord (EN 1731 + EN 166)

Sturdy safety boots with good tread

3 What to say

Spoken script for the supervisor. Read or paraphrase, in order.

1 The 15-metre rule

This is the big one with a brushcutter, because it throws stuff. Stones, wire, metal, glass, all of it comes off the head at speed and travels a long way, far enough to take someone's eye out at fifteen metres. So while you're cutting, nobody, crew or public, is inside that zone. If someone walks into it, you stop, you don't carry on and hope. On a footpath or roadside, somebody marshals that edge.

2 Match the head to the job

Cord, brush blade or saw blade, and they all behave differently. Cord flings fine debris everywhere, that's why you double up on eye protection for it. A metal blade cuts heavier stuff but it'll kick back hard if it catches. Use the right head for what you're cutting and the guard that goes with it, don't run a blade with a cord guard or no guard at all.

3 Blade thrust: when the blade kicks back

With a metal blade on, if the wrong part of the blade hits something solid, a stump, a stone, a fence post, the whole machine gets thrown back at you. Cut with the correct part of the blade, keep it sharp and undamaged, and don't drive it into stuff it isn't made for. A chipped or cracked blade gets changed, not nursed through the afternoon.

4 Walk it first

Before you start, walk the ground you're about to cut and clear or flag the throwables, wire, stones, rubble, bottles, hidden ironwork, dog mess. You won't get all of it, that's why the zone and the PPE exist, but the stuff you clear now is stuff that isn't coming back at you or somebody's window later.

5 Harness on, machine balanced

Use the harness, set up so the machine hangs balanced and you're not fighting its weight all day, that's how you keep control and save your back and shoulders. Secure footing, no overreaching on a bank, and switch it off when you're walking any distance between bits, not carrying it running with the head spinning.

6 Eyes, twice over on cord

A mesh visor on its own is fine for chunky debris but the fine bits off a cord head go straight through the mesh, so when you're strimming on cord it's the visor and safety glasses underneath. Your eyes don't grow back. Ear defenders on too, the machine and the surroundings are over the noise limit.

7 Fuelling, same as the saw

Engine off and cooled before you fuel it, proper non-spill can, away from any ignition, no smoking nearby. Same drill as the chainsaw, it's still a hot two-stroke with petrol going into it.

4 Common mistakes to call out

Letting people stay inside the 15m zone while cutting
Running a metal blade with no guard or the wrong guard
Strimming on cord with only a mesh visor and no glasses underneath
Driving a blade into material it isn't designed for (blade thrust)
Cutting toward a road, footpath, parked cars or windows
Carrying the machine between areas with the head still spinning
Using a chipped or cracked blade rather than changing it
Fighting the weight with no harness, or a badly set-up one
Refuelling near a source of ignition

5 Watch on site this week

What the supervisor should be actively spotting on walk-arounds.

People drifting inside the 15m exclusion zone
Debris being thrown toward roads, paths or property
Wrong or missing guard for the cutting head fitted
Operators on cord with no glasses under the visor
Damaged metal blades still in use
Machines carried about with the head running
No marshal on the public-facing edge of roadside work
Harness not worn or poorly adjusted

6 Confirm the team understood

Ask one or two of these at the end of the talk.

1. How far do we keep people back while cutting, and why? (15 metres minimum, because the head throws stones, wire and debris that far.)
2. What extra PPE goes on when running cord? (Safety glasses under the mesh visor, because cord throws fine debris through the mesh.)
3. What is blade thrust? (A metal blade catching solid material and throwing the machine back at the operator.)
4. What do you do if someone walks into the work area? (Stop cutting straight away, don't carry on and hope.)

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A toolbox talk is generic by design. It works on every site. Your RAMS isn't. Briefkit writes site-specific Risk Assessment & Method Statements for £30 per document. **briefkit.co.uk**

Briefing register: Brushcutters & Clearing Saws

All operatives who attend this toolbox talk must sign below. Their signature confirms they have heard and understood the briefing.

Briefing delivered by:

Name (print):		Date:	
Signature:		Time:	
Site:			

Attendees. I confirm I have heard and understood the briefing detailed above:

#	Name (print)	Company / Role	Signature	Date	CSCS / Ticket No.
1					
2					
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Keep this register in the site Safety File. Additional sheets may be appended if more than 12 operatives are briefed.

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This is a generic toolbox talk for industry use. It is not site-specific. Site-specific risk assessments and method statements are a separate document.