

TOOLBOX TALK

BRIEFKIT

# Chainsaw Safety

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

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

## 1 Why it matters

By law, anyone using a chainsaw must be trained and competent for the work they're doing, and must wear the right protective clothing every time. HSE guidance INDG317 and current industry best practice set out how it's done safely. In recent years direct contact with a chainsaw has killed five people in forestry and arboriculture and seriously injured many more, and HSE's own investigations show most of those came down to operators not following good practice, usually to save time.

## 2 PPE required for this task

Forestry helmet with mesh visor and ear defenders (EN 397 / EN 1731 / EN 352)

Chainsaw boots (EN ISO 17249)

Eye protection under the visor where fine debris is likely (EN 166)

Chainsaw trousers, Type A front protection minimum (EN ISO 11393-2)

Chainsaw gloves (EN ISO 11393-4)

### 3 What to say

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

#### 1 The one that gets people: kickback

I'll start with the thing most likely to put you in hospital. Kickback is when the tip of the bar catches something and the saw gets thrown straight back up at your face and neck, faster than you can react. Keep the upper tip of the bar out of contact, keep the chain sharp, and let the chain brake do its job. A blunt chain is dangerous, because you start forcing it and that's when you lose control. Two hands on the saw, always, thumbs wrapped right round the handles.

#### 2 The right ticket for the right cut

You don't touch a saw on this job unless you're trained and competent for it, and it's got to be the right ticket. Crosscutting and felling small stuff is one thing, felling bigger trees is another, and going up a tree is a different world again with its own ticket. If you're not signed off for the cut in front of you, you come and find me. No 'I've done it before'.

#### 3 Check it before you pull the cord

Quick check every time before you start: chain brake actually works, chain's sharp and tensioned right, bar oil's topped up and feeding, throttle springs back to idle on its own, anti-vibration mounts aren't knackered, and there's no fuel weeping anywhere. If the chain brake doesn't work, the saw's finished for the day, it doesn't get used.

#### 4 Nothing above your shoulder, feet planted

Keep the saw below shoulder height. The second you lift it up to reach something, you've lost control and the bar's right by your head. Get proper footing, balanced, don't overreach off a slope or a stump. If you can't reach the cut safely from where you're stood, you reposition, you don't lean.

#### 5 Wood under tension will bite

Branches and stems under load are storing energy, and they'll spring the second you cut them. Read the limb before you touch it, work out which way it wants to go, and stand to the safe side. On anything over about 50mm or under tension, three-cut method, so it can't snatch or split back on you. Spring poles especially, they'll come round and take your legs out.

#### 6 Fuelling and the hot saw

Engine off and cooled before you fuel it, never with it running or red hot. Away from anyone smoking, use the proper non-spill can and a funnel so you're not slopping two-stroke everywhere. A hot saw goes down on bare ground or a mat, not on dry brash, or you'll start a fire you didn't plan for.

## 7 The cut that doesn't stop bleeding

If a saw gets you, it gets you badly and fast, so we plan for it before anyone starts. Who's carrying the big trauma dressing, where is it, who's ringing 999, and what's our what3words right now so the ambulance finds us. On a quiet verge or in a wood that matters even more. We sort this at the start of shift, not while someone's bleeding.

## 8 Vibration and noise, the slow ones

Chainsaws hammer your hands with vibration and they're well over the noise limit, so ear defenders go on and stay on. Watch your trigger time, swap off, and if your fingers start tingling, going numb or turning white, tell me, don't sit on it. There's a full hand-arm vibration talk and we'll run it properly, but it starts with not gripping a saw all day without a break.

## 4 Common mistakes to call out

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- Cutting with a blunt chain and forcing it (the fast route to kickback)
- Lifting the saw above shoulder height to reach a cut
- Running the saw one-handed for 'just a quick nick'
- Chain brake not applied when walking between cuts
- Cutting a limb under tension without reading which way it'll spring
- Refuelling a saw that's still hot, or near someone smoking
- No trauma dressing on site, or nobody knowing where it is
- No what3words / location sorted before work starts in a remote spot
- Working a saw solo with no way to call for help

## 5 Watch on site this week

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

- Operators reaching above shoulder height with a running saw
- Blunt chains being forced through the cut
- Chain brake left off while carrying the saw
- People stood inside the cutting area while a saw's running
- Hot saws set down on dry brash or near fuel
- Anyone cutting tensioned wood without standing to the safe side
- Trigger time creeping up with no rotation or breaks
- Trauma dressing missing from the first aid kit

## 6 Confirm the team understood

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

1. What is kickback and how do you reduce the risk? (Tip of the bar catching and throwing the saw back at you; keep the tip clear, chain sharp, two hands, chain brake on.)
2. When does the chain brake go on? (Every time you move between cuts or the saw isn't cutting for more than a few seconds.)
3. Who's carrying the trauma dressing today, and what's our what3words?
4. A saw's chain brake isn't working. What happens? (It's out of service for the day. No exceptions.)

### Need site-specific RAMS for this work?

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## Briefing register: Chainsaws (Ground Use)

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

### Briefing delivered by:

<b>Name (print):</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Time:</b>	
<b>Site:</b>			

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

#	Name (print)	Company / Role	Signature	Date	CSCS / Ticket No.
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
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7					
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10					
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12					

Keep this register in the site Safety File. Additional sheets may be appended if more than 12 operatives are briefed.

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