



WORKING SAFELY IN THE WOODS



Thinning Saw Guidelines

Thinning means clearing out small saplings that have no commercial value, allowing quality timber a better chance to develop properly. This gives the crowns and root systems room to spread and the ability to use ground nourishment and sunlight. After an area has been thinned, the remaining trees grow larger and mature more quickly.

Knowing correct thinning techniques and understanding how to get the most out of your thinning saw will allow you to clear safely and effectively. Below are a few safety guidelines from WorkSafeNB.

REGULATIONS FOR THINNING OPERATIONS

The *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* has specific legislation around logging and silviculture operations. We have taken a few excerpts from the Act and summarized them below, but this is in no way an exhaustive list, and other rules apply.



FIRST AID

There must **always** be an adequate first aid kit onsite, as well as someone trained in first aid. The First Aid Regulation outlines the supplies that must be contained in your first aid kit, and the rules around properly trained first aid providers.

The regulation on first aid also says that you must perform a **risk assessment** so you are properly prepared for an emergency situation, and you must develop an emergency evacuation plan. You should consider emergency communications, road conditions, and the best route to the nearest hospital. The maximum distance between a worker and the nearest vehicle should be no more than 600 metres, and it is recommended that you maintain an open (safety) trail between cut strips.

Every thinning saw operator must carry or keep close at hand a **pressure bandage**, as well as an appropriate **fire extinguisher** for fire prevention. Another thing to consider is whether any workers are allergic to bee or wasp stings. These people should be identified and should carry bee sting kits with them at all times. Employers may want to supply a bee sting kit with the first aid kit and train their first aid providers on its use.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Always wear a **hard hat**. The hat should be equipped with a **visor** to protect your eyes, or you may wear **safety glasses** instead. You must also wear **hearing protection** as well as **safety boots** with ankle support and slip-resistant soles.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Chicots must be identified and treated with care before you begin to work. This dangerous type of tree has injured and killed an unfortunate number of woodworkers. For more information, please refer to another pamphlet in our *Working Safely in the Woods* series entitled *Chicots*.

Regulation 91-191 of the *OHS Act* also specifies that no employee operating a thinning saw may work alone, and a minimum distance of 10 metres must be kept between thinning saw operators and other workers.

YOU MUST ENSURE THAT YOUR SAW IS MAINTAINED AND OPERATED ACCORDING TO THE MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATIONS.

MAINTAINING AND OPERATING YOUR SAW

It is your obligation to ensure that your saw is maintained and operated according to the manufacturer's specifications. Below are a few rules to follow:

- Check your saw blade for cracks. If the blade has a nice ring when you snap it, it is a good indicator that it isn't cracked. Replace the blade at the first sign of a crack or fracture.
- Ensure that your saw has an adequate blade guard. Guards need to be replaced if they are broken or damaged.
- Check the condition of the saw harness, and ensure the emergency release is working. The snap for attaching the harness to the saw must close securely so the saw cannot come off the harness during operation.

- Check the overall condition of the saw. Make sure the shut-off and the trigger lock are working, that the handlebars are secure, and that the muffler and spark arrester are in good condition.
- Do not start your saw while it is attached to the harness. The saw must be started **before** it is attached to the harness.
- Always shut the motor off and ensure the blade has stopped turning before removing debris around the blade area.
- Take care when refuelling your saw:
 - Never refuel your saw while the engine is operating
 - Carry fuel in a non-glass, CSA*-approved container, and use a spout or funnel when refuelling
 - Do not refuel near a source of ignition, such as dry tinder or smoking material
 - Once you have refuelled your saw, move at least three meters away from where you refuelled before you start the engine
- Make sure that all trees are cut cleanly and put to the ground (do not girdle trees).

OTHER SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is a good idea to do **warm-up** and **stretch exercises** before you begin working. A surprising number of soft-tissue injuries occur to thinning workers, so it is especially important to pay attention to the terrain and watch your step. WorkSafeNB also recommends that you wear a **reflective vest** when working in the woods, especially when there is low visibility. Being seen could save your life.

For more information about workplace health and safety, call WorkSafeNB at 1 800 222-9775, or visit us online at www.worksafenb.ca.

Other publications available in our Working Safely in the Woods series:

General Guidelines
Chainsaw Guidelines
Proper Felling Techniques
Chicots