



**WORKING SAFELY  
IN THE WOODS**  
Chainsaw guidelines

People use chainsaws every day, for many tasks. Some use them to earn their living cutting trees and trimming log loads, and others simply want to cut firewood or remove a dead tree from their backyard. Although this pamphlet is intended for the professional timber harvester, it's useful for the weekend woods worker too. Whether you use a chainsaw for work or yard maintenance, it's vital that you learn to use it properly. Learning the correct techniques, combined with an understanding of how to get the most out of your chainsaw, will allow you to work effectively and safely. Below are a few safety guidelines from WorkSafeNB.

**REGULATIONS FOR CHAINSAW OPERATIONS**

The *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* has specific legislation around logging and silviculture operations. We have taken a few excerpts from the regulation and summarized them below, but this is in no way an exhaustive list, and other rules apply. Please visit our website at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca), and refer to the *OHS Act* and regulations for more information.

**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 when you are working in the woods, you must develop an emergency evacuation plan. You should consider emergency communications, road conditions, and the best route to the nearest hospital.

Every chainsaw operator must carry or keep close at hand a pressure bandage, as well as a round point shovel and suitable fire extinguisher for fire prevention. Another thing to consider are any workers with allergies 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 the following:

- Hardhat. The hat should be equipped with a visor to protect your eyes, or you may wear safety glasses instead.
- Hearing protection.
- Safety boots with chainsaw protection, ankle support and slip-resistant soles.
- Safety pants lined with chainsaw-resistant material.
- Leather gloves. (Not required by law but recommended)

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

*Regulation 91-191* of the *OHS Act* also specifies that no employee operating a chainsaw may work alone. If you operate a chainsaw to fell trees, please refer to another pamphlet in our **Working Safely in the Woods** series, entitled *Proper Felling Techniques*.

**OTHER SAFETY OBLIGATIONS**

- Maintain and repair your saw according to the manufacturer's specifications.
- Immediately remove a defective saw from service.
- When operating your saw, keep both feet on a firm surface and both hands on the saw.
- Start your saw against a solid object, below waist-level.
- Never start your saw one-handed (for example, by pulling on the cord with one hand while engaging the throttle with the other).
- Stop the motor before adjusting the chain.
- Never draw your saw toward yourself.
- Never operate your saw above shoulder height.
- If you must use your saw to cut brush or small saplings, use extreme caution. The risk of kickback is very high.
- Engage the brake or stop the motor before carrying your saw from one location to another.

WorkSafeNB also recommends that you never use the kickback area (top half of the tip of the saw) for cutting.

**MAINTAINING AND OPERATING YOUR CHAINSAW**

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:

- Always check your chainsaw carefully to ensure all parts are present and working properly (chain brake, throttle lockout, chain catcher, shock absorbers, muffler, and spark arrester).
- Check the chain to ensure it is sharpened to the manufacturer's specifications, and that it has adequate tension.

- 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 refueling.
- Do not refuel near a source of ignition, such as smoking material.
- Once you have refueled your saw, move at least three metres away from where you refueled before you start the engine.



**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 chainsaw workers, so it is especially important to be attentive to the terrain and watch your step. WorkSafeNB also recommends 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 health and safety, call WorkSafeNB at 1 800 222-9775, or visit us online at [www.worksafenb.ca](http://www.worksafenb.ca).

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

- General Guidelines*
- Thinning Saw Guideline*
- Proper Felling Techniques*
- Chicots*