



Disaster

readiness - response - recovery

For immediate release

Use Chainsaws Safely

When a major storm scatters broken trees and other debris, cleanup can involve chain saws. But each year, about 40,000 people die or are injured in chainsaw accidents. To protect your life and your property, you need to know how to use the tool properly.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension provides these chainsaw safety guidelines:

- Review the owner's manual carefully.
- Make sure your saw is well-maintained, with sharp teeth, correct chain tension, proper lubrication, a properly tuned engine and functioning safety equipment. Your operator's manual will contain specifics.
- Make sure the saw you are using is right for the job: Mini- or lightweight saws, with guide bars up to 14 inches, are right for light and occasional use in pruning, cutting small logs and cutting down small trees. Midweight saws, with guide bars from 14 to 20 inches, are best for cutting logs and cutting down small to medium trees. Heavyweight saws, with guide bars over 20 inches long, should be used only by a professional.
- Wear well-fitted clothing free of dangling or ragged edges that could get entangled in the saw or the brush. Safety eyeglasses are essential for protecting against flying dust and other debris. Hardware and other supply stores sell protective chaps or leggings made of synthetic fabrics designed to prevent the running saw from coming in contact with your legs. A hard hat can protect your head from falling limbs and other debris. A good pair of ear plugs can protect your hearing. Be sure to wear sturdy gloves and shoes.
- Have a first-aid kit nearby.
- Before you get started, watch where limbs will fall and plan an escape route should a tree suddenly start to fall in your path.
- Do not climb trees while operating a chainsaw.
- Be careful when cutting material under tension, such as a leaning or strained tree.
- Don't cut anything other than wood.
- While people and animals shouldn't be in the area where you are working, there should be some one within calling distance who can help if you get in trouble.
- Avoid using a chainsaw in wet, windy or dark conditions.
- Wait a few minutes for the motor to cool before refueling.

For more information on disaster recovery, contact your county's North Carolina Cooperative Extension center or visit the Web site www.ces.ncsu.edu/disaster/.