

Chain Saw Safety & Compliance Game Plan



The 5 steps to take to prevent chain saw injuries and OHS violations.

Chain saws, or power-driven tools for cutting wood are common at not just forestry and lumber but many kinds of work sites. They're also extremely dangerous. Cuts are the primary hazard, including those that occur when a worker contacts a chain saw that's not running. And when chain saws are running, they generate flying debris that can injure the eyes and noise levels that can lead to hearing damage. Other hazards including snapping chains, electric shock, motor exhaust and what's known as 'kickback,' a sudden jolt in an upward direction. In addition to serious or even fatal injury, failure to comply with [OHS chain saw safety regulations](#) can also lead to [fines](#), stop-work and other enforcement actions. Here's a 5-step Game Plan to ensure this doesn't happen to you.

Defining Our Terms

This Game Plan addresses chain saw use in general industrial and construction workplaces rather than in forestry, logging and silviculture operations, which in many jurisdictions are subject to separate OHS regulations.

5-Step Chain Saw Compliance Game Plan

There are 5 basic sets of measures you must take to minimize chain saw injuries and ensure compliance with OHS requirements.

1. Ensure Chain Saws Meet General Design & Construction Requirements

Employers that furnish chain saws for workers to use must ensure that the [equipment they select](#) is properly designed and constructed for the work it's used to carry out. Most jurisdictions (Alberta, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Northwest Territories and Nunavut are the exceptions) require chain saws to meet some version of CSA Z62.1, *Chain Saws*. Chain saws must also be equipped with safety features protecting workers against kickback. Such equipment typically includes a braking mechanism that automatically stops the chain when kickback occurs, regardless of where the power head or operator's hands are positioned. In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, chain saw construction must meet CSA Z62.3, *Chain Saw Kickback*.

2. Ensure Proper Chain Saw Inspection, Maintenance & Storage

Chain saws must be inspected, kept clean and maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Equipment found to have potentially dangerous damage or defects must be immediately marked as unsafe, locked out, removed from service and reported to a supervisor to determine if the saw should be repaired or thrown away. Equipment should also be turned off and locked out during servicing. Chain saws must be placed, kept and stored in a safe place and away from elevated surfaces where they could fall on somebody or in walkways or

other places where they may pose trip hazards.

3. Implement Safe Work Procedures for Chain Saw Operators

Safe work [policies](#) and procedures are crucial to preventing chain saw incidents and injuries. While procedures may vary slightly depending on the manufacturer's instructions, at a minimum, they should require workers who operate a chain saw to:

- Stop the motor before carrying a chain saw from one location to another, unless the next location's in the immediate area;
- Turn off the motor before adjusting the chain and saw, following manufacturer's instructions.
- Start the saw when it's cold by holding it firmly against a solid object below waist level;
- Hold the saw firmly in both hands and stand on a solid, stable base while operating it;
- Move the saw at least 3 m (10 ft.) from where it was refueled before starting the engine;
- Refuel only from an approved gasoline container with a spout or funnel to prevent spillage;
- Not drop start the saw by pulling on the cord while the other hand engages the throttle mechanism;
- Not operate the saw above shoulder height; and
- Not refuel the saw while the engine is operating or it's near a source of ignition.

4. Ensure Chain Saw Operators Use Required PPE

You must ensure that workers wear appropriate PPE when operating a chain saw, including:

- [Safety footwear](#) meeting CSA Z195 or a standard offering

equivalent protection, that has chain saw protection on the top and sides and non-slip soles;

- Leg protection that's properly secured, protects the knee and leg from the top of the safety footwear to the groin and made of at least 3-ply 2108 nylon or material affording equivalent protection;
- Safety glasses, goggles or other protection shielding the worker's [eyes and face](#) from chips, flying debris and other hazards;
- [Protective gloves](#) or other suitable protection against hand hazards and vibration; and
- Suitable hearing protection.

Workers operating chain saws must also have a pressure bandage and other suitable first aid equipment and, if work is performed during fire season, a readily available and suitable fire extinguisher or round point shovel.

5. Provide Chain Saw Operators Safety Instruction & Training

Ensure that all workers who are required or permitted to operate chain saws receive instruction and [training](#) from a qualified person covering:

- The safe and proper inspection, maintenance and storage of chain saws;
- How to carry out the required safe work procedures; and
- The proper use of required PPE.