



## FACT SHEET

# Preventing Chain Saw Injuries During Tree Removal After a Disaster

## Be aware of the risk of chain saw injury during tree removal

Each year, approximately 36,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for injuries from using chain saws. The potential risk of injury increases after hurricanes and other natural disasters, when chain saws are widely used to remove fallen or partially fallen trees and tree branches.

## Safeguards against injury while using a chain saw

- **Operate, adjust, and maintain the saw according to manufacturer's instructions** provided in the manual accompanying the chain saw.
- **Properly sharpen chain saw blades and properly lubricate the blade** with bar and chain oil. Additionally, the operator should periodically check and adjust the tension of the chain saw blade to ensure good cutting action.
- **Choose the proper size of chain saw to match the job**, and include safety features such as a chain brake, front and rear hand guards, stop switch, chain catcher and a spark arrester.
- **Wear the appropriate protective equipment**, including hard hat, safety glasses, hearing protection, heavy work gloves, cut-resistant legwear (chain saw chaps) that extend from the waist to the top of the foot, and boots which cover the ankle.
- **Avoid contact with power lines** until the lines are verified as being de-energized.
- **Always cut at waist level or below** to ensure that you maintain secure control over the chain saw.
- **Bystanders or coworkers should remain at least 2 tree lengths (at least 150 feet) away** from anyone felling a tree and at least 30 feet from anyone operating a chain saw to remove limbs or cut a fallen tree.
- **If injury occurs, apply direct pressure over site(s) of heavy bleeding**; this act may save lives.

## Beware of injury from the release of bent trees or branches

**Take extra care in cutting "spring poles": trees or branches that have gotten bent, twisted, hung up on, or caught under another object during a high wind.** If the tree or the branch is suddenly released, it may strike the person cutting it, or a bystander, with enough force to cause serious injury or death. Even a seemingly small tree or branch (2 inches in diameter, for example) may pose a hazard when it is released from tension.

### To avoid injury:

- Identify the maximum point of tension on the spring pole
- Slowly shave the underside of the tree rather than cut through to allow the tree or branch to release tension slowly

September 25, 2004

Page 1 of 2

## Preventing Chain Saw Injuries During Tree Removal After a Disaster

(continued from previous page)

### How the public can help

- **It is best to have a chain saw** operator who has training and experience in safe chain saw use and cutting techniques to fell and remove limbs from trees.
- **Be sure that bystanders are at a safe distance from cutting activities**, the chain saw operator uses personal protective equipment, and workers follow safety guidelines.

For more information, see [How to Use a Chainsaw Safely](#)

(<http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/departments/espm/extension/CHAINSAW.HTM>) from the University of California.

For more information, visit [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters),  
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).

September 25, 2004

Page 2 of 2