

Chainsaw safety

Safety features to look for if you need to buy or rent a chainsaw to clear trees from your yard:



1 Reduced-kickback chain: Chains have extra guard links that keep the cutters from taking too large a bite.

2 Reduced-kickback bar: This has a narrow tip or nose that reduces the chance of kickback by limiting the contact area where it occurs.

3 Chain brake: Internal brake stops the chain almost instantly. Can engage when the handguard is triggered, as well as automatically.

4 Bar-tip guard: A steel cover that prevents kickback by covering the bar nose. It also shortens the bar's length by about 1½ inches.

5 Trigger lockout: This palm switch or button must be pressed before the throttle trigger will operate.

6 Shielded muffler: Most mufflers are covered so operators can't touch them and burn themselves.

Protective gear

Before you crank the saw and start to cut, protect yourself with:

■ **Leg protection** such as chaps, leggings or cut-resistant pants.

■ **Hard hat** if there's any material overhead.

■ **Gloves or mittens** with an enhanced gripping surface.

■ **Eye protection** with side shields.

■ **Hearing protection** such as earplugs or earmuffs.

■ **Boots or shoes** with steel toes and nonskid soles.



Felling a tree

■ Determine the angle the tree will fall and make the correct cuts. Falling trees tend to kick straight back.

■ Plan a clear avenue to escape the falling tree, away from the trunk at an angle, not straight back.

Taking off limbs and cutting tree into manageable pieces still requires caution.

■ Always work on the uphill side when cutting.

■ See how the tree is balanced and which way it will move if a supporting branch is cut.

■ Take special care to avoid binding and kickback that can occur when the weight shifts.

Dos and don'ts

Above all, read the owner's manual carefully before operating a chainsaw.

Do keep the cutting area clear of spectators and pets.

Do work with a partner if possible.

Do note any overhead hazards, including hanging tree limbs and utility lines.

Do stand to the side when cutting.

Do cut at full throttle; bring the saw up to speed before starting cuts.

Do keep both hands on the saw handles.

Do let the saw come to a complete stop before reaching for the chain or blade.

Do cut wood only. Dirt and rocks are not meant to touch the chain.

Do be careful with small branches — unweighted limbs may spring back when cut.

Don't cut from a ladder.

Don't touch a hot muffler.

Don't cut above chest height.

Don't use the bar for leverage. It's there to guide and support the cutting chain.

Don't bury the tip in the wood.

Don't push the saw. Let the saw do the work.

Don't refuel a hot saw.

Don't operate a saw when you're tired.

Sources: Reprinted with permission from *Consumer Reports* magazine, May 2001 (www.consumerreports.org) and Lowes