



CHAINSAW VS THE HUMAN FOOT

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The modern power saw is an engineering marvel. Technology and design has allowed engine speed to exceed 15,000 RPM's on some production saws. Coupled with a razor sharp saw chain, the chainsaw is a very effective tool. The chainsaw has been the work horse in the logging woods for years. In spite of an ever growing mechanical presence in the woods, the chainsaw remains one of our go-to tools when it is needed.

Recently, we have seen a rising occurrence of saw cuts to the feet. Education and training are designed to reduce the chance of injury, or turn around a trend. The first step in this process is to study the animal, the chainsaw. As earlier stated, the modern chainsaw is a very effective cutting tool. To be effective the saw engine and saw chain must be finely tuned and maintained. A chilling fact is the cutting tooth of the saw chain is designed to REMOVE! Saw chain doesn't cut like a filet or hunting knife. If we are running a 3/8 pitch chain, the cutter is 3/8 of an inch wide. Upon contact with the human body, there is 3/8 of an inch of skin; muscle; tendon and bone that are gone! Add to the fact that a lot of foreign material, (Bar oil, dirt, pieces of shoe leather, etc.) is introduced to the wound area. This injury becomes quite serious.

Next in the loss control process is to AVOID CONTACT with the moving saw chain. Chainsaw kick-back is the culprit in the majority of all laceration incidents. Chainsaw kick-back happens seven times quicker than what the human brain react to. By the time a human can move a foot or shield a face, the cut has happened! Kick-back injuries can be reduced by understanding the reactionary forces of the bar and chain unit of the saw. Proper bracing and the use of the "thumb-wrap" grip counteracts the reactionary forces of the moving saw chain. The chain brake on the power saw should be treated like a safety on a firearm. When not cutting, the chain brake should be engaged to avoid unexpected chain movement. Above all, proper body placement greatly reduces the risk of a serious chainsaw laceration. If the foot is not in-line with the saw chain, it won't be injured there!

Personal Protective Equipment, (PPE) in the form of cut-resistant foot wear is federally mandated for saw hands. Chainsaw cut-resistant foot wear can prevent or greatly reduce the seriousness of a cut situation. Protective foot wear comes in many forms and styles and is quite comfortable to wear. It just makes good sense; it's like having extra insurance should a situation arise. As with any PPE, catastrophic injury can be prevented or reduced by its use. My angle on the subject is to train and educate to avoid having to rely upon the PPE for protection.

The recent trend of chainsaw foot lacerations has been severe. Many of the cuts have dealt with contact to the bone, which often requires bone-graft surgery. To avoid this possible crippling injury training and education reduce the risk of incident. Good work habits and the use of proper PPE reduce the chance of injury. Try as they may, the chainsaw will always have a place in the logging woods.

2015 Safety Meeting Record

Date: _____ Company: _____

Names and signatures of ALL attendees to be attached.

Conducted by:(signature) _____