

# Loss Control Insights

## Basics of Chain Saw Safety

As you know Pittsburghers has had more than their share of severe storms this summer and now we are heading into the season when homeowners are cutting fire wood for the winter.. If you are involved in trimming or pruning trees, whether at work or at home, understand the hazards and how to stay safe. Here are a few basic issues to consider when using a chain saw.



**Match the saw** to the type of job you expect to do most often. Select a saw no larger nor smaller than you need. To be safe, select a saw with a chain brake.

**Fueling the Saw** Gasoline is an extremely flammable fuel. Use extreme caution when handling gasoline or fuel mix. Fuel your chain saw in well-ventilated areas, outdoors only. Always shut off the engine and allow it to cool before refueling. Relieve fuel tank pressure by loosening fuel cap slowly. If the chain saw is a 2-cycle engine, make sure fuel/oil mixture is correct.

**Beware of Power lines.** You can be injured or killed if you contact a power line. Protect yourself by always assuming that power lines are energized. When possible, have the utility company deenergize and ground or shield power lines.

Keep ladders, boom trucks, and other equipment a safe distance from power lines:

- 10 feet (ft) for lines carrying 50,000 to 345,000 volts (V)
- 16 ft for lines carrying 345,000 to 750,000 V
- 20 ft for lines carrying more than 750,000 V

**Splitting Wood** is a skill that must be learned and that will improve with practice. Having the proper tools makes the job easier. Tools used to split firewood include a splitting ax, a sledgehammer, a splitting maul, and wedges.

The quickest way to split small, easy to split pieces is with an ax. An ax can get stuck, however, in larger, hard to split pieces. A splitting maul is a combination ax and maul, with a wedge on one end and hammer on the other. Use the wedge end just as you would an ax. The broader wedge keeps the blade from jamming as easily in the wood. The hammer side can be used to pound on any wedges you may need to use.

**Personal protective equipment** should always be used when working with a chain saw

- A hard hat to protect your head from limbs and branches.
- Safety glasses or goggles to prevent injury from flying wood chips.
- Earmuffs or earplugs to protect ears from 100-decibel or higher engine noise when using a gasoline powered chain saw.
- Lightweight gloves to protect hands from abrasions and cuts.
- Trim-fitting clothing free of ragged edges which could become tangled in the saw or snag on limbs.
- Heavy work boots or shoes with high tops and steel toes.
- Chain saw chaps