

Loss Control Insights

What's The Big Deal About Kickback?

Kickback is one of the greatest saw hazards. It occurs when a force throws the saw rapidly and sometimes uncontrollably towards you. It is a very violent and sudden motion which can severely or fatally injure you. There are several causes:

- an abrupt change in wood character -- hitting a knot or a nail
- striking a nearby limb with the tip of the moving chain while cutting
- running the chain too slowly
- twisting the saw in your cut so the chain grabs
- using a dull or loose chain
- having a loose grip on the saw or cutting with only one hand
- not paying attention

But kickback can be prevented by a few steps and precautions on your part. These DO NOT PREVENT kickback completely, but they do reduce the possibility of it happening to you.

- Always hold the saw firmly with both hands and keep the left arm as straight and stable as possible
- Use a saw equipped with a chain brake, anti-kickback chain, or other Anti-kickback devices.
- BUT, do not rely exclusively upon safety devices.
- Watch for twigs that can snag the chain -- the area should be free from any obstructions.
- Cut with the lower part of the saw blade-not with the tip or nose.
- Maintain a high saw speed when entering, cutting and leaving the wood cut.
- Keep the chain sharp.
- DO NOT cut above mid chest height -- the saw is too close to your face.
- DO NOT cut brush or shrubbery.

The more you understand kickback and what it can do to you and your saw, the better chance you have of controlling its surprise movement by keeping your balance and control over the chain saw.

Chain Saw Troubleshooting

If you are having difficulty cutting or the saw is cutting poorly, there are several problems you should consider:

- the chain is dull

- the chain is improperly sharpened
- the chain is installed backwards
- the chain is not properly tensioned
- the bar and chain are not properly lubricated
- the guidebar is damaged
- the exhaust ports are dirty
- the fuel filter is dirty
- the air filter is clogged
- the spark plug is fouled

Your chain saw will also give you clues when it is time to sharpen the chain.

- when you notice the chain tends to walk sideways while cutting
- when the cut produces fine powder instead of chips
- when you find yourself pressing down hard to keep cutting
- when you smell burnt wood
- when it takes considerably longer to complete cuts made in less time earlier on the job

As always ~ be safe!