

# Trees and Safety



from the **TREE CITY USA®  
BULLETIN**

*There are few trees that do not require at least occasional pruning or other work. For the non-professional, such tree care can be enjoyable and rewarding. By the same token, it can cause serious injury or death. The difference is awareness and an attitude aligned with safe work practices. This bulletin presents some important ways to make certain that the work you do benefits not only the trees — but keeps you healthy, too.*

## How to Avoid Common Mistakes

A chain saw is one of the greatest labor-saving devices ever invented. It is also one of the most dangerous. When used properly, however, it is both efficient and safe. When used improperly, it is unforgiving. Complete instruction is not possible on these pages, but here are a few of the most common mistakes made by non-professionals when working on trees — and how to avoid them.

### Starting the Saw

We have all seen a chain saw being started while the operator stands or walks and pulls the starter rope. This dangerous practice is called “drop starting,” and it is prohibited by OSHA rules except under rare circumstances (such as when professionals work in a tree’s canopy). Instead, start the saw on the ground, as illustrated, in a cleared area that is as level as possible.



After selecting a safe area and checking for proper chain tension, oil and fuel, start the saw by holding the saw firmly against the ground with one hand on the front handle and placing a knee or foot on the rear handle. Give the starter rope a quick but short pull. Make choke adjustments as necessary.

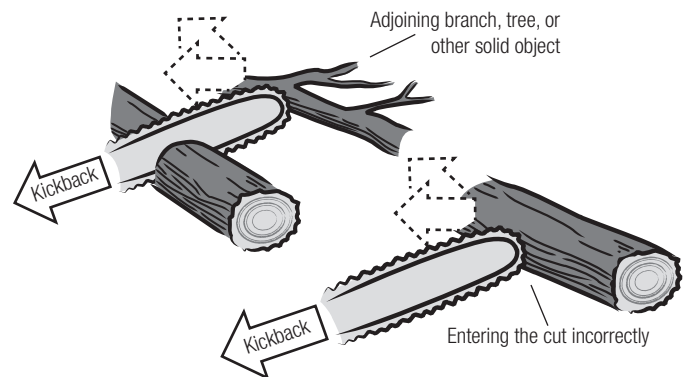
### Carrying the Saw

Carrying an idling chain saw is not recommended, so plan ahead to start the saw as close to where you will be working as possible.

### Preventing Kickback

Close to 85 percent of chain saw injuries are caused by kickback. Kickback results primarily from touching the tip of the saw against an object. This rapidly thrusts the saw upwards and/or backwards, potentially striking the operator, especially if he/she loses control of the saw during the kickback.

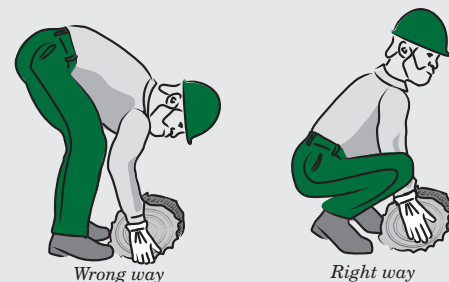
Kickback can be prevented by always having both hands firmly gripping the saw and making certain only the mid-section of the rotating chain is in contact with what is intended to be cut. It also helps to keep the chain sharp, clear of accumulated sawdust, and to operate at full speed when entering and exiting a cut. Some saws come equipped with a safety tip that reduces the chances of accidental contact with another object; use of this device is a good idea for inexperienced operators.



Two common causes of kickback are shown here. Other causes include slow running speed, twisting the saw while cutting, damp sawdust accumulating in the chain, and improper chain tension.

### WATCH YOUR BACK!

Lifting limbs, cut sections of trunk, and containers of wood waste are common activities — and common sources of back pain. Avoid this by remembering people are not cranes. Lift using your knees, not your back. Plant your feet firmly, keep your back straight, and hold the load close to your body as you lift. If you have to strain — get a helper.



*Make proper lifting part of your routine.*

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- Dehydration and heat exhaustion
- Hidden dangers to watch for
- Ladder safety
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