



Chainsaws are inherently dangerous tools. They are proven to be efficient in cutting down trees so it is no surprise that they can cause serious injury to flesh and bones in quick fashion. Each year there are over 30,000 injuries in chainsaw-related incidents in South Africa. Many of these injuries occur at home, however there are many workers who are injured on the job using chainsaws. Most of the hazards can be mitigated through proper training, proper use, and wearing the correct PPE.

Chainsaw Injury Statistics

- Most injuries from chainsaw use are due to “kickback”. Kickback occurs when the tip of the chainsaw hits a hard object such as a knot in the wood and kicks back towards the person operating it.
- 36% percent of chainsaw injuries affect the legs and knees.
- The average chainsaw injury requires 110 stitches according to the South African Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Chainsaw Safe Work Practices

- Read the entire operation manual before using any chainsaw. Always operate within the manufacturer’s guidelines.
- Do not alter any guards on the chainsaw. Also do not alter any safety features such as a lock-out or “dead man” switch. These switches will prevent the chainsaw from engaging accidentally or will shut the chainsaw off if pressure is not applied on the switch.
- Wear the correct PPE for using a chainsaw. Correct PPE includes: Protective chaps, hard hat, face shield, gloves, earplugs, and protective toe boots. While it may be an expensive investment, correct PPE will be far cheaper than a trip to an emergency room.
- Do not operate a chainsaw on a ladder or any unstable surface. Losing your balance while operating a chainsaw can result in a deadly injury.

Discussion point:

1. Does anyone know of someone who was injured while using a chainsaw?

