

INDUSTRY ALERT

INJURY

Saw kicks during limbing, causing severe foot injury

What happened?

A young cutter was limbing a tree when the tip of his saw bar contacted an object. The saw kicked suddenly, causing a severe gash to the cutter's left foot. He was taken to hospital where reconstructive surgery saved his foot, but the healing has been slow

Why did it happen?

Kickback occurs when the chain is suddenly forced to stop while the saw is cutting at full throttle. The energy of the chain is transferred to the saw in the opposite direction. The result is that the entire saw violently pushes off from the point where the chain was stopped. High-energy kickbacks that occur when the cutter is off-balance or standing in an awkward position are the most dangerous of all. Such kickbacks occur during the limbing of trees, because other limbs and the tree trunk are close to the limb that is being trimmed, as well as when logs are being bucked, because other logs may be piled behind the one that's being cut.

Improper handling of the saw increases the chances of a serious kickback, as does any situation in which the cutter's vision of what he's cutting is partly obscured for any reason.

How can it be prevented?

Good footing, proper posture, a solid grip on the chain saw and a constant alertness to the presence of other material or objects in path of the saw bar can help prevent kickback. Cutters must ensure that they can clearly see what they're cutting. Chainsaw maintenance is also important to prevent kickback. Cutters must keep their saw chains sharp and ensure that depth gauges are set exactly to the manufacturer's specifications for height. Chain tension should also be properly adjusted. Personal protective equipment can't prevent a kickback, but it certainly can minimize injuries if a serious kickback occurs. The CSA has published standards for protective footwear that contain guidelines for chainsaw boots designed specifically to prevent a saw from cutting into the shin, ankle, foot and toes.

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