



DANGER



Greater Houston
Chapter

*Ever use a chain saw? Sure, lot's of times!
Ever hurt yourself with a chain saw? Sure, lot's
of times. Would you do it again? Sure, why
not? Heck, anyone can operate a chain saw.
It's a piece of cake.*

Have you ever heard anyone say “It’s a piece of cake?”

“Yeah, it was the guy that said anyone could ride a motor cycle. It’s a piece of cake.” And, a few minutes later, I heard the sound of sirens, and then a rescue squad truck whizzed past. And, you guessed it, the operator of the motor cycle was in the back of the rescue squad truck, all bandaged up. Poor guy.

Well, what about that Paul Bunyan Chain Saw? Do you think you could operate it safely? Do you know how to refuel it? Do you know how to climb a ladder with it? Do you know how to safely cut underbrush, or tree trunks, or tree limbs?

Let’s think about this some more. What’s dangerous about a simple chain saw? Can it bite you? Can it cut you? Can it cut your hand off? Your leg? Whoops, there goes another finger.

O.K., I think we all now agree that a chain saw is inherently dangerous, especially in the hands of a novice, a beginner, or a braggart!

Consider the hazards listed below:

- **Refueling** – If we’re using a gasoline-fed chain saw, what will happen if we’re refueling it, and the chain saw blade is almost red hot. Can there be a fire? Maybe even an explosion?
- **Electrical Extension Cords** – Chain saws have a habit of cutting extension cords in half. What will happen to you if your chain saw accidentally cuts into an electrified cord? Shock? Burns? Unconsciousness? Death? Sad ending.
- **Whiplash** – You’re cutting tree limbs or major underbrush. What happens when one of those tree limbs snaps back at you? What about heavy underbrush that whips back into your face? Your eyes? Probably nothing would happen if you were wearing wrap-around safety goggles, or a face shield.
- **Chain Saw Guards** – Most chain saws don’t have guards on them because of the configuration of the long blades/chain. So your welfare is totally dependent on your skills as chain saw operator, a person who has a healthy respect for his safe handling of a potentially dangerous weapon.
- **Ladders** – We normally access trees with the use of a ladder. So, now with a chain saw in our hand, we start to climb the ladder with one hand because the other is busy holding that chain saw. Why did we fall ten feet to the ground just when we had

reached that limb we wanted to cut off? Because, dummy, it takes two hands, and two feet, to safely climb any ladder.

- **Use a Line** – Don't be a victim like that mentioned in improper use of a ladder. Take a rope with you, with the bottom of the rope tied securely to your chain saw. When you reach that limb you want to cut off, pull the chain saw up until you're securely tied off to a strong limb above you.

What are some of the other hazards associated with that chain saw operation? Here are a few:

- **Cutting knuckles** when sharpening chain saw blades.
- **Loose clothing** that can wrap around the chainsaw when it's operating.
- **Long hair** that can get entangled in the chainsaw blade.
- **Jewelry** that can become entangled in the chainsaw blade.
- **Loud noises** (well over 100 decibels) require the use of ear plugs.
- **If the chainsaw blade wraps** around an extension cord, or a life-line, it can pull a part of your body into the blade itself.
- **Barbed wire**, hidden in underbrush, can possibly fly into your face when the saw blade hits it.
- **Shin guards** should be worn by chainsaw operators when cutting underbrush.
- **Long-sleeved shirts, and long pants**, should be worn when cutting underbrush ... and possible even when climbing through tree limbs and foliage.
- **Orange cones** should be placed around work areas where chainsaws are being used, to protect nearby workers, and passers-by.
- **Erect DANGER signs** in the vicinity of chainsaw operations.

We can clear an acre of underbrush in an eight-hour shift, with a sharp, well-oiled and safely operated chainsaw.

But how many fingers will be severed, how many injuries will it cause when being used by a novice, that new-hire, or someone who is just plain careless?