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To: Rains County Leader

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Monthly Safety Blast

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Chainsaw Safety

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 36,000 people are injured by chainsaws annually and that number continues to grow. Medical costs for chainsaw injuries based on these facts amount to about 350 million dollars per year. Kickback, binding and pull-in are injuries from chainsaws that are highly documented on each state's fact sheets.

Kickback of a chainsaw occurs when the teeth on the chain catch on something as they rotate around the tip of the blade. The teeth may have enough force to cause the blade to kick back violently toward you, hence the term "kickback." Chainsaw kickback could also happen when the nose of the blade strikes another object or starts to bore a cut improperly or when the blade nose or tip catches the bottom or side of a cut during reinsertion. See picture to the right for example.

Binding (or pinching) occurs when the material you're cutting clamps down and stalls the cutting chain inside of the kerf (or cut). Binding can lead to kickback, pushback and pull-in. Be aware of how the weight of the branch or log can shift and bind the saw when you are cutting. Learn cutting techniques that help avoid binding. The proper use of appropriate felling and bucking wedges can also help prevent binding.

Pull-in occurs when the chain at the bottom of the bar stops suddenly due to pinching or striking a foreign object, immediately drawing the saw forward. To help minimize pull-in, start your cut with bumper spikes set against the branch or log you're cutting and make sure you cut only when the saw is up to full speed. Be aware of weight shifts or situations that can bind the saw.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

Before you even think about cranking the saw and starting to cut, protect yourself. **ALWAYS** wear protective clothing and gear, including:

- Leg protection; such as chaps or cut-resistant pants
- Hard hat
- Gloves with an enhanced gripping surface and cut resistance
- Eye protection with side shields
- Hearing protection; such as earplugs or earmuffs
- Boots or shoes with steel toes and non-skid soles

Dos and Don'ts:

Above all, read the owner's manual carefully before operating a chainsaw. The following list is not all-inclusive, merely a reminder to keep safety first in your mind at all times.

Dos

- Keep the cutting area clear of spectators and pets.
- Work with a partner if possible.
- Avoid overhead hazards, such as dead, hanging limbs that may fall and utility lines.
- Keep the chain clean, sharp and lubricated with the correct oil.
- Make sure the chain oil supply is full before starting the saw.
- Be careful of inclines and ground that is uneven.
- Stand to the side of what you're cutting.
- Cut at full throttle; bring the saw up to speed before starting cuts.
- Keep both hands on the saw handles.
- Let the saw come to a complete stop before reaching for the chain or bar.
- Turn off the saw or activate the chain brake when carrying the saw.
- Carry the saw so that the bar is pointing behind you.

Don'ts

- Do not wear loose clothing.
- Do not use the tip to cut.
- Do not cut with a chainsaw above shoulder height.
- Do not refuel a hot saw.

Be aware of the effects of gravity on the wood you are cutting. Gravity will cause a log

to bend when it's cut, resulting in compression and tension. Compression can lead to binding of the saw and tension can cause the wood to spring out when released.

References:

- www.bls.gov
- www.cdc.gov/niosh
- www.baesg.org/chainsaw.htm