

# Chainsaw Kickback!

We have had two serious ‘kickback’ events in recent months, one resulting in serious cuts!

Chainsaw kickback injuries were at one time among the highest of the injury categories and many bushman show scars on forearms, shoulders and even their faces. Those sorts of injuries have dropped away – most likely due to good training and improvements in chainsaw design, notably safety devices.

It is therefore unusual to see a couple of serious events, one after the other, involving highly trained people.



## Incident Descriptions – What Happened!

**FIPS 8157 23/08/2016:** Attempting to clean up the cuts in a scarf, a tree feller lost balance and slipped over. As he fell to the ground, his chainsaw swung back and the spinning chain struck his left forearm causing a severe laceration.

**FIPS 8275 16/09/2016:** Trimming the lower branches around an unpruned tree, a tree feller ‘up- cut’ a branch causing the saw to kickback. The tip of the bar made contact with the trunk, which drove the saw from the operator's right hand and activated the chain brake. The chainsaw, with some force, hit the operator in the right forearm.

There can be no doubt – a chainsaw is not a tool to be underestimated! Of note, in these two cases, is the ‘skill and experience’ levels of the fellers involved. Both held the National Certificate in Advanced – Production Tree Felling, L4. One feller had 217 credits of learning and the other had a massive 429 credits and no less than 6 National Certificates!

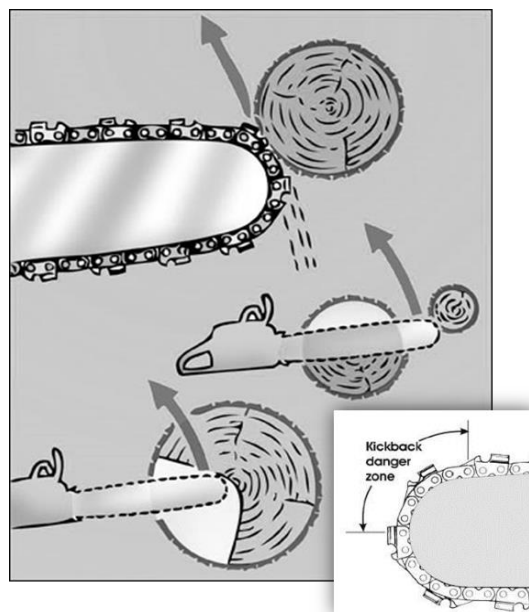


# Avoiding Kickback Hazards!

“Kickback is a potential danger whenever you use a chainsaw. You need to know why it occurs and how to reduce it...” **WorkSafe NZ**

Kickback occurs when the upper part of the bar tip (the kickback danger zone – see images) contacts a solid object or is pinched. This causes a reactive force that may throw the guide bar in an uncontrolled arc towards you, causing injury.

To the chainsaw operator, the rule about ‘not using the kickback danger zone’ is like the rule that says ‘not to point a gun at someone...!’ If you do, and it goes off, the results will be dire!



## How to Reduce Kickback – Operating Techniques:

Using proper operating techniques will invariably reduce the likelihood of kickback!

Irrespective of how experienced we are, there are a few well-known techniques and practices that we should always follow and respect:

- [ ] Always hold the chainsaw ‘firmly’ with both hands.
- [ ] Ensure your thumb is wrapped firmly under the front handle and in the mitt if fitted.
- [ ] Be vigilant – and always aware of the location of the guide bar tip.
- [ ] Refrain from using the guide bar tip – don’t allow it to make contact with any objects.
- [ ] Be especially careful when cutting lighter limbs that can flex and/or catch the chain.
- [ ] Do not over-reach or cut above shoulder height – this substantially reduces control!
- [ ] Always use extreme caution when re-entering cuts.
- [ ] Maintain your chainsaw – importantly the chain brake and other safety devices.
- [ ] Make sure that the side-cover bolt is secure and that the nut is properly tightened.
- [ ] Use a guide bar that is the correct length.
- [ ] Keep the chain sharp and set the depth gauges by using the correct gauge.

# Files, Puncture Wounds and Gloves!

**“An iron fist in a velvet glove...”**

Charles V, who said these words, was describing **someone who appears soft but is actually particularly tough**. The reality for many forestry workers can be the opposite – while they do the ‘hard yards’, and look tough, their hands are no more durable than the hands of any other person and numerous incidents show that this is true... for example:

**FIPS 8285 26/09/2016:** A worker was putting a file into a wooden handle. The handle was rotten and so the file went straight through the handle and the sharp end went into his thumb. The wound became infected and the injury caused lost time.

**Forestry work typically involves the hands** and so an injury such as the one described above is **going to be limiting** for the person involved. A puncture injury often worsens if infection sets in and could take months to heal because of antibiotic resistance.



## PCBU’s, Workers and the ACOP Rules!

The **HSWA 2015, s. 36**, shows that a PCBU (typically the business that employs workers) is duty bound to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of its workers. Workers too, (s. 45) must take **reasonable care** of their own health and safety!

The ACOP, on p. 30 (s. 3.8) says, “Gloves of the appropriate material shall be worn when there is the potential for harm.” PF Olsen’s own rule adds, “Gloves shall comply with EN 388:1994 (or similar) standard.” It is important that people start using protective gloves thereby reducing these needless and senseless injuries!

# HSW Act 2015 – s. 25 **Notifiable Event**

Event type	What's happened?	What you must do
Notifiable death	<p>People's health and safety are seriously threatened or endangered as a result of a work situation</p>	<p>If someone has been exposed to a serious or immediate risk to their health and safety because of an unplanned or uncontrolled work incident, then you <b>MUST</b> notify us as soon as possible.</p> <p>› <a href="#">Find out more about which unplanned or uncontrolled incidents are notifiable.</a></p>
Notifiable injury		
Notifiable illness		
Notifiable incident		

## Not Only New – Something You Must Do!

You **must** notify WorkSafe NZ when certain work-related events (notifiable events) occur.

Under the HSW Act 2015, you will be required to:

- Notify as soon as possible, when a notifiable event occurs.
- Preserve the site until a WorkSafe Inspector arrives, or are otherwise directed.
- Keep records of all notifiable events.

**What is a notifiable event?** A notifiable event is a:

- Death
- Notifiable illness or injury (see HSW Act section 23), or
- **Notifiable incident**<sup>2</sup> (a serious incident) occurring as a result of work.

The very best advice on these matters can be found on the WorkSafe NZ website. WorkSafe NZ have provided a tool [WorkSafe NZ Notifiable Events Tool](#) that enables users to **find out when they will need to notify** WorkSafe NZ. This tool, displayed in the graphic above, is very simple to use and provides information in a concise format. **NB:** Click on the blue hyperlink above to access the 'tool'.

<sup>2</sup> A notifiable incident (see HSW Act section 24) means an unplanned or uncontrolled incident in relation to a workplace that exposes a worker or any other person to a serious risk to that person's health or safety arising from an immediate or imminent exposure to—(and there are 13 separate categories discussed).