



ROOFERS USING CHAINSAWS

During assessments for the Preventing Falls from Height project, inspectors have identified that some roofers are using chainsaws to cut roofing battens in situ and are not wearing the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Roofers must wear personal protective equipment if using chainsaws to cut roofing battens.

A chainsaw should only be used when it is not practicable in the circumstances to use a safer alternative when cutting battens on a roof.

Safer alternatives

Roofing battens can be measured and cut at ground level, and safer alternatives would be to use:

- a battery powered skill saw should be used to avoid trailing cables
- an electric skill saw, drop saw or bench saw while ensuring that the trailing cable is managed
- a handsaw.

Using a chainsaw at height

Chainsaws are potentially dangerous machines which can cause serious harm if used by untrained people and/or the correct PPE is not worn. Using a chainsaw becomes more hazardous when it is combined with working at height.

Anyone who uses a chainsaw at work should have received adequate training, and be competent in using a chainsaw for that type of work, along with wearing the correct PPE.

Employers have a duty to plan the work and select appropriate work equipment to make it as safe as possible, along with identifying hazards and putting in place control measures.

For more information on safety when using a chainsaw, refer to the *Ministry's Guide to Safety with Chainsaws, 2011*.

Chainsaw safety features

To prevent kickback all chainsaws must be used with a chainsaw mitt and be fitted with a chain brake.

Chainsaw personal protective equipment

It is essential that anyone using a chainsaw, either on or off the ground, is provided with and wears appropriate PPE.

As well as using appropriate safety equipment, chainsaw users should wear protective clothing which complies with New Zealand Standards or their overseas equivalents.

When you buy your safety equipment, make sure that it bears a NZ Standards number or "S" mark. This is a guarantee that it has been manufactured to stringent standards to offer maximum protection.

Personal Protective Equipment Needed

Footwear: Boots should have steel toe caps and give firm ankle support. Lace-up types must be securely fastened so that you don't trip on the laces.

Leg protection: Wear good-quality chainsaw operators' safety trousers or chaps. These should be designed to meet the Standard AS/NZS 443.3:1997.

Safety helmet: Wear a helmet to protect your head from potential falling objects and to minimise the risk of injury to the face in the event of a kickback.

Earmuffs: Wear earmuffs rated Class 5.

Eye protection: If you are working in very dusty conditions, wear goggles. If there's a danger of flying debris, use a helmet visor.

General clothing: This should fit fairly closely but be comfortable and allow free movement.

What enforcement action might be taken by a Health and safety inspector?

The Ministry expects anyone working on a roof to be controlling other hazards associated with working at height. The Ministry's factsheet on *Proactive enforcement approach to preventing falls from height* outlines the compliance expectations for inspectors visiting worksites where work is taking place on roofs.

For more information for working safely on roofs, refer to the *Ministry's Best Practice Guidelines for Working on Roofs*.