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DECELERATING CHAIN SAW LACERATES UNPROTECTED LEG

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BACKGROUND: An individual in the Lake States with many years of chain saw operating experience was cutting some logs for firewood for personal use in the late afternoon after his regular job. The temperature was high that day, and the operator was feeling heat discomfort.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: The operator stated that he had many years of experience operating a chain saw and was well aware of the safe operating practices explained in his safe operating procedures manual.

UNSAFE ACT OR CONDITION: The operator, after a long shift in the mill, decided to cut firewood in the woods after his shift. He was feeling tired after the long shift and the heat of the day was adding to his fatigue. The operator was working in regular clothes and was not wearing any safety gear.

ACCIDENT: The chain saw operator finished a cut and then stood up with the saw at waist level and turned to walk away. The chain was decelerating as the operator walked away. The saw flopped downward and cut into the left side of his left knee. The saw coasted to a stop when he lifted it back up. The operator stated, "What amazed me the most is that it cut through me and my jeans as easily as peeling potatoes."

INJURY: The operator received a large cut requiring many stitches. He claims that he will have a scar the width of the saw to remind him of the accident.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:

- The operator should have rested after his shift, rather than cutting while fatigued or feeling severe heat discomfort.
- When finished making the cut, the operator should have engaged the chain brake to stop and lock the chain before taking his attention away from the saw. Users of chain saws should be sure their saws are equipped with properly functioning chain brakes.
- The operator should have been wearing personal protective equipment, whether he was cutting commercially or not. He should have been wearing leg protection, as well as work boots, face protection, gloves, and hearing protection.

Reviewed by:

Melanie Mathieson
FRA Field Consultant

Facts and Figures about Chain Saw Injuries

- Chaps are designed to protect the leg, where most chain saw injuries occur.
- The average chain saw injury requires 110 stitches.
- Medical costs for chain saw injuries amount to about \$350 million per year.
- Associated Workers' Comp costs can be estimated at \$125 million annually.
- Loss of production as well as loss of quality of life for the injured cannot be adequately quantified, but may in fact represent the single largest cost.

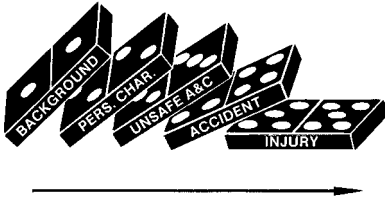
Accident location and frequency related to chain saw use (totals for 1999)

- Head Area – 2,686
- Upper Body – 2,452
- Hand Area – 10,200
- Upper Leg, Knee, Lower Leg – 10,310
- Foot Area – 1,872

TOTAL – 27,520

Statistics – US Consumer Product Safety Commission Report on Chain-Saw Related Accidents in 1999

Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.



This Safety Alert analyzes an injury in accordance with the chain of events represented by the five dominoes at left. Pioneer industrial safety experts H. W. Heinrich and Alfred Lateiner developed this accident analysis system to provide a graphic sense of how injuries can be avoided. Their methodology has been accepted by safety professionals worldwide.

SAFETY MEETING REPORT

Date: _____ Company: _____

Topic(s) Discussed: _____

Names of Employees Attending:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Conducted By: _____

Signed: _____

Comments / Recommendations:

