

City of Urbandale
Chainsaw Safety Policy



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Purpose

The City of Urbandale wants everyone to stay safe when using chainsaws. This policy applies to all employees who use chainsaws for regular work or emergencies.

It does **not** apply to logging operations.

Copies of this policy are available:

- At the Parks & Public Works Maintenance Facility office (9401 Hickman Road)
- Online at www.urbandale.org/safety
- From the Director of Risk Management/Support Services

Responsibilities

Director of Risk Management/Support Services (or Safety Leadership team member):

- Review this policy every year and update training needs
- Keep employee training records

Directors (in each department):

- Make sure employees are trained and wear safety gear
- Ensure chainsaw safety rules are followed
- Review chainsaw use in their department once a year

Supervisors:

- Only allow trained employees age 18+ to use chainsaws
- Make sure employees only use chainsaws within their skill level
- Enforce the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Keep a first aid kit on site
- Stop unsafe work immediately

Employees:

- Use the right tools for the job
- Tell a supervisor if a task is too difficult or unsafe
- Inspect the worksite before starting (look for hazards like power lines, vehicles, or buildings)

Questions about this policy should go to:

- Facilities Maintenance Supervisor or Parks Supervisor
- Assistant Director of Public Works
- Director of Risk Management/Support Services

Chainsaw Safety Rules

Work Area

- Mark the work area so others know to stay away
- Keep people at least twice the tree's height away when cutting down trees
- Clear obstacles that might cause tripping or unsafe footing
- Watch for electrical/utility lines; stay at least 10 feet away (or more depending on voltage, per OSHA rules)

Before Starting

- Check all controls, bolts, chain tension, and handles
- Use the right chainsaw size for the job
- Fuel chainsaws at least 10 feet away from sparks or flames
- Electric chainsaws must be certified by a recognized testing lab
- Never use a chainsaw with broken or disabled safety devices
- Clear dirt, rocks, nails, and debris from the cutting path
- Never work alone – at least one coworker must be close enough to see and help in an emergency
- Always wear required PPE (see Appendix A)
- Have a first aid kit and a way to call 911 or EMS

Operating the Chainsaw

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Do **not** "drop-start" the saw
- A "drop-start" is done by holding the saw in one hand and pulling start cord with the saw held unsecured, with the other hand, in the air
- Always start the saw with the chain brake on and a firm grip of the saw to limit movement of the saw when pulling the starter handle
- Use the chain brake or turn off the saw when walking more than 50 feet or crossing rough ground
- Plan where the tree or branch will fall, and clear the area
- Don't cut overhead whenever possible; cut only at shoulder height or below

Preventing Kickback

Kickback happens when the top of the chain near the tip catches on something, forcing the saw back toward you. This can cause serious injury.

To prevent it:

- Always use both hands
- Don't stand directly behind the cut
- Avoid cutting above chest height

Stay Within Your Skill Level

Some jobs are too risky without advanced training. Don't try to cut:

- Trees on steep slopes or unstable ground
- Trees leaning heavily or with root/stem rot
- Trees with large cracks or splits
- From a bucket truck, ladder, or tree if you're not trained

If a job is too dangerous, the city may hire outside contractors instead.

Appendix A – Required Safety Gear (PPE)

	Required PPE	Example
	Head protection	Hard hat
	Hearing protection – sufficient to reduce noise exposure to 85 decibels or less	Ear plugs or earmuffs
	Eye & face protection	Safety glass or full-face shield
	Leg protection	Chaps or cutter pants
	Hand protection	Leather gloves
	Foot protection	CSA approved footwear
	Fall protection	Body harness, lanyard, or another appropriate device

Chainsaw Safety



Before You Start

- Check the chainsaw equipment
- Work with a partner
- Wear proper clothing:
 - well-fitted clothing
 - work pants
 - work gloves
 - hard hat
 - safety glasses
 - steel-toed boots
 - ear protection
 - **NO** jewelry or loose clothing
- Remove loose leaves, tree limbs, and debris from work area



Using a Chainsaw

- Work at least 10 feet from any fueling area
- Avoid electrical hazards
- Start the chainsaw on the ground
- Stand to one side of the cut
- Cut at chest height **ONLY**
- Maintain a firm grip & wide stance to avoid kickback
- **NEVER** cut with the nose or tip of the blade

