



Chainsaw injury inflicted by work colleague

An operative involved in vegetation management recently sustained an injury when he was struck by a chainsaw being used by a work colleague. The accident resulted in cuts and grazes to his left forearm.

The injured operative was collecting off-cuts in the immediate vicinity of the chainsaw user. He was not in view of the chainsaw user, but positioned directly behind him. The task involved timber being cut from a laying limb which had just been removed from a 20ft tree.



It was being snedded out so it could be processed through a chipper.

The branch being cut moved suddenly due to a strong gust of wind and twisted the whole limb around. This subsequently pushed the chainsaw back with the chain running round and hitting the second operative's left arm as he was picking up a branch. At this point the chainsaw was slowing down as the operator had released his grip on the trigger. The chainsaw user was unaware that anyone was behind him in the exclusion zone.

Learning Points

1. NEVER enter exclusion zones, especially in the immediate vicinity of chainsaw, chipper or plant activities. Keep well clear at all times and maintain safe distances.
2. Supervisors should brief staff on agreed exclusion zones, and monitor and control these.
3. Personnel controlling exclusion zones should remain vigilant during works and intervene where necessary, and always challenge anyone attempting to enter these zones.
4. Effective communication should be maintained by all – ensure you are aware where colleagues are and who is around you, especially when operating tools, plant and machinery.
5. Always be mindful of changing site conditions, and be aware of the need to continually assess and review additional risks that may emerge during work tasks.

If in doubt about anything – STOP and consult with your Line Manager, Supervisor or Health and Safety Advisor.

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