



Tree faller injured while clearing undergrowth

INCIDENT

A 32-year-old tree faller with 15 years' chainsaw experience suffered lacerations to the face when his chainsaw kicked back.

CIRCUMSTANCES

While he was cutting blackberry undergrowth to clear a path to a tree, the tip of the rotating chain struck a dry limb that was hidden in the undergrowth. The obstructions caused the chainsaw to kickback and strike the operator in the face.

INVESTIGATION

The investigation revealed that:

The tree faller had not gripped the front handle of the chainsaw correctly — a safety mitt is only fully effective if the thumb is under the handle and held firmly.

An incorrect cutting method was also used.

The chain brake failed to activate because the side cover around the brake band area required cleaning.

The front engage and disengage handles were set too far forward.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR ADVICE

When cutting blackberry or similar undergrowth:

- Have a correct grip on your chainsaw
- Hold your front arm straight in the locked position.
- Operate the chainsaw with a side-to-side sweeping action.
- Make sure your chainbrake is operational.
- Ensure you have eye protection.

Note: This material has been prepared using the best information available to the Department of Labour at the time of publication. Information may change over time and it may be necessary for you to obtain an update. This material is also only intended to provide general advice and does not constitute legal advice. You should make your own judgement about action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with your workplace health and safety obligations under the law.

