



Wood Chipper Safety

If you've ever seen what a wood chipper can do to a large tree branch, you'll quickly realize why safety precautions are extremely important when using this powerful piece of equipment. Wood chipper related injuries can range from minor scrapes to eye injuries and amputations and can even cause death. Most fatal incidents result from being caught in the chipper, and a smaller number occur when an object kicks back from the chipper, striking the operator. To avoid accidents, follow the precautions below:

Safe Operation Practices:

- Read the manual and obtain training on the proper use of the equipment
- Inspect the woodchipper prior to each use
- Remove all debris prior to each use
- Make sure that guards are properly in place
- Stand to the side of the machine when feeding materials and do not reach or kick inside the feed chute for any reason
- Assign at least two employees to remain in close contact when operating the chipper
- Do not wear any loose fitting clothing, including loose safety vests or chaps, when feeding the chipper. Secure long hair or beards
- If chipper becomes plugged, shut it down and apply lock out/tag out procedures
- Only use a wooden type push paddle to push small material into the feed wheels
- Chock the wheels
- Keep the area around the chipper clean to avoid slipping or tripping

Recommended PPE:

- Eye protection/safety glasses
- Hearing protection/ear plugs/earmuffs
- Loose fitting clothing and gloves without cuffs
- Wear slip resistant footwear
- Hand protection

Maintenance:

- Fluids should be checked prior to each use
- Lock the drum/cutting wheel when performing maintenance
- Clean the air filter regularly
- Be sure that all instructions and safety stickers are still intact and visible on the equipment
- Replace blades and spark plugs annually
- Test the emergency shutoff and direction reverse prior to each use to ensure proper function

Additional Resources:

- Hazards of Wood Chippers - [Chipper SHIB.4.1.08 \(osha.gov\)](#)
- Preventing Wood Chipper Fatalities - [Preventing Wood Chipper Fatalities | Blogs | CDC](#)
- Preventing Wood Chipper Fatalities Video - [Action Page – Preventing Wood Chipper Fatalities \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [TMLIRP Media Library](#)
 - Basic Training for Ground Operations in Tree Care: Brush Chipper Orientation and Maintenance, DVD # 281
 - PPE: Don't Start Work Without It , DVD #667