

SAFETY: Clothing that is trim fitting and free of any ragged edges should be worn

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entire leg, including the calves and thighs.

Chaps are manufactured with a range of protective layers, or ply, which correlate to the size of chainsaw used. All chainsaw safety chaps should come from the manufacturer with an Underwriter Laboratories (UL) label verifying that the level of leg protection has been tested and meets the minimum cut resistance standards.

Chainsaw safety chaps are designed to be worn over clothes. Proper fit is essential to maximize the functionality of the chap. When purchasing a set of safety chaps, pay attention to the length of the chap and how it is measured. Some manufacturers use a standard pant inseam for sizing while others provide the overall length of the chaps as a size reference.

Chaps should fit snugly with all straps connected, not just the hip strap. If all the straps are not securely buckled, the moving chain could potentially pull the chaps out of the way, exposing your leg. Chaps should also extend down to the top of your foot.

Clean chaps according to manufacturer guidelines. This typically involves washing with a mild detergent and air drying. Never put them in the dryer; the cut-resistant material could be damaged. If chaps have been folded and stored, a good practice before use is to unfold and shake the pants; this helps the internal fibers to realign. Lastly, if the chaps are ever damaged and interior fabric is exposed, dispose of them. Never try to close the hole by sewing or patching.

Eye protection

Wear safety glasses or goggles to prevent flying debris from entering your eyes. Eye protection should



Protective gear that should be worn when working with a chainsaw at left.

be impact resistant and offer protection on all sides.

Corrective glasses and sunglasses typically do not offer this type of protection and should not be worn in the place of safety glasses. If either of these types of glasses is needed, wear a safety goggle over the out-

side of the glasses or a face shield to ensure proper eye protection.

Keep safety glasses clean and apply an anti-fog coating to reduce fogging and the temptation to remove and cut without glasses.

Some hard hats designed for chainsaw use may come

equipped with a clear plastic or mesh face shield. The clear plastic will suffice for eye protection but safety glasses or goggles are considered better. The mesh face shield will help prevent large pieces of debris from getting into eyes but should not be used in place of safe-

ty glasses.

Hearing protection

Gas-powered chainsaws operate at a sound level of 110 decibels, which will cause hearing damage if prolonged exposure occurs. To mitigate hearing damage, wear hearing protection whenever the saw is in operation. To ensure adequate hearing protection, noise should be reduced to below 85 decibels. Since most chainsaws operate at 110 decibels or more, hearing protection should exceed a 25-decibel reduction. Two acceptable forms of hearing protection are earplugs and earmuffs.

Earplugs are manufactured out of a soft plastic or foam and designed to be inserted into the ear canal. Earplugs are typically the cheapest and most effective in noise reduction but they may not be the most comfortable to wear.

Earplugs must be used correctly to be effective. To properly insert earplugs, reach over your head with the arm opposite the ear being plugged. Pull up on the top of the ear to straighten the ear canal and insert the plug.

Earmuffs are designed to fit snugly over the entire ear. Noise reduction and hearing protection from earmuffs will vary depending on style. Some hard hats come equipped with earmuffs. To maximize hearing protection, they must cover the ears and fit snugly against the head.

In some situations, wearing both earplugs and earmuffs may be necessary. Wearing both does not increase sound reduction capacity but will increase the amount of hearing protection. The added protection is calculated as a 5-decibel increase of the higher level of protection. For example, if you are wearing earplugs that offer 33-decibel reduction and earmuffs that offer

25-decibel reduction, the level of protection will be 38 decibels (33 decibels plus 5).

Foot protection

Many cutting situations involve risk to feet and ankles, whether from missing the target or stumbling. Always wear heavy work boots or shoes with high ankle support when operating a chainsaw. Steel- or safety-toed boots will further protect your toes from being cut by the saw or crushed by heavy debris. Cut-resistant safety boots are commercially available but are not required; these types of boots provide the maximum amount of protection but can be extremely hot to wear.

Hand protection

Although not required when operating a chainsaw, hand protection is recommended to protect hands from abrasions, cuts and burns. Always wear gloves when performing saw maintenance or changing or sharpening a chain; you are at greatest risk of being cut or burned in these situations. Gloves also can help you grip and control the saw better. Cut-resistant gloves are commercially available but are rigid and can make it difficult to operate a saw while wearing.

In addition to proper PPE, always wear clothing that is trim fitting and free of any ragged edges which could be entangled in the saw or snag on debris. If you are required to wear high-visibility safety vests, they should be the tear-away kind in case caught by the saw.

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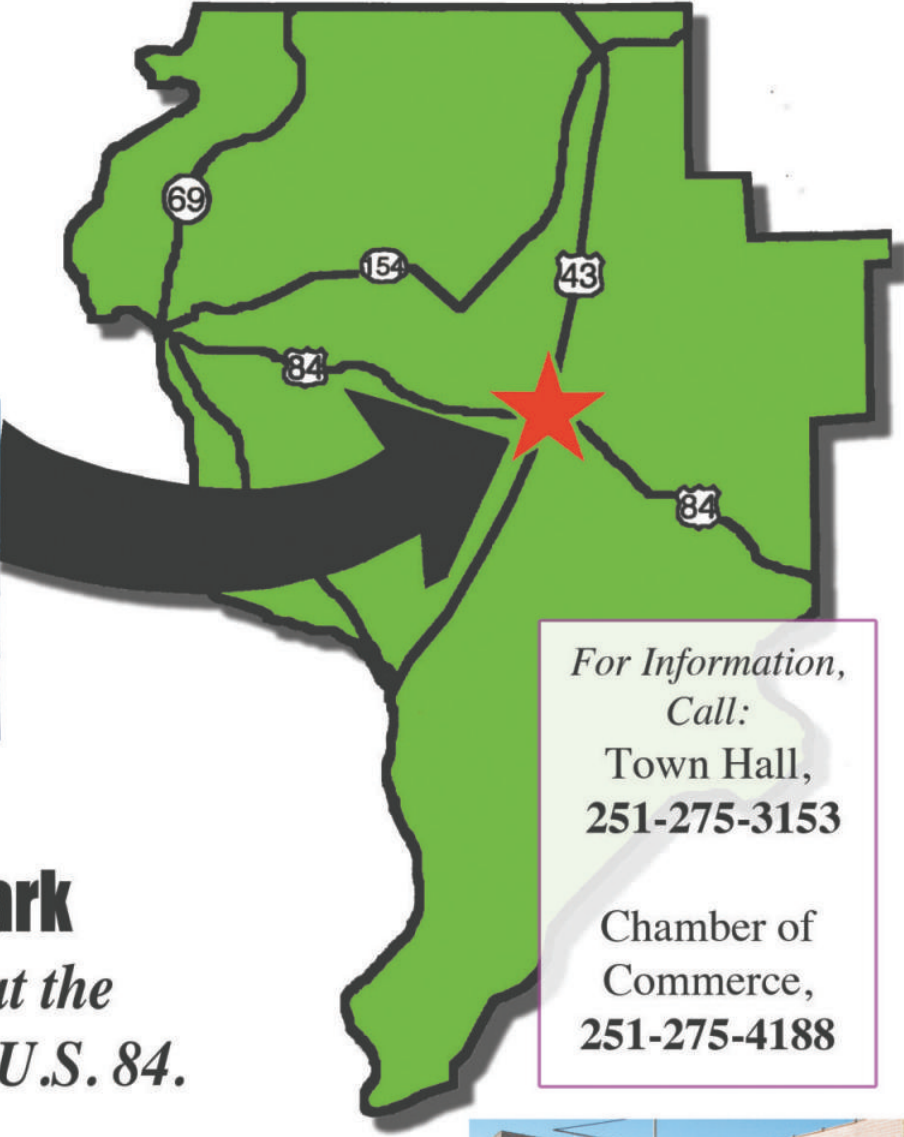


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