

RHYL & St ASAPH ANGLING ASSOCIATION

CHAIN SAW, BRUSH CUTTER AND POLE SAW POLICY AND METHOD STATEMENT

Aims and Objectives

This policy and method statement covers all personnel that use chainsaws, brush cutters and pole saws as part of their duty.

Legal background

Health and safety legislation requires voluntary organisations to undertake risk assessments of all work-related activities. The Generic Risk Assessment for Rhyl and St Asaph Angling Association associated with riverbank maintenance using chainsaws, brush cutters and pole saws will be kept with the Health and Safety Policy. Operators should be aware of HSE's Approved Code of Practice for chainsaws: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg317.pdf>.

Control Measures

Working party leaders have the responsibility to ensure the safe use of chainsaws, brush cutters, tree felling, removal and other associated works. All volunteers or contractors that use chainsaws, brush cutters and pole saws as part of their duty must be suitably qualified, with the correct certification and PPE.

Users should ensure they have sufficient safety equipment that is maintained and meets current standards. To wear appropriate personal protective equipment and inspect the tools before and after work. They have to perform routine maintenance to ensure that the machinery is in good working order and if there are problems to report these to the river keeper/leader of work party to arrange repairs.

Minimum Qualifications

Chainsaw and pole saw: NPTC Tree felling and Crosscutting, LANTRA competency certificate for crosscutting and pole saw.

Brush cutter: LANTRA competency certificate. Volunteer operator who, through knowledge and previous use, is considered competent.

Continuous training

All qualified operators should take the opportunity, when possible, to refresh skills with another officer who more regularly uses a chainsaw or brush cutter.

Procedures

Chainsaws and pole saws are among the most hazardous power tools used. The unguarded cutting chain, difficult working terrain and stresses applied to the materials to be cut creates high potential hazard. The use of proper operating procedures, personal protective equipment, safeguards and maintenance on saws and proper work planning and execution can greatly reduce these potential hazards. Note: safe use of a chain saw requires an alert operator. It is very important to take breaks e.g. 10 minutes for every tank refuel and 30 minutes for every 3rd tank.

Tool Components

All saws must be fitted with the following in good working order:

Chain brake (tested before sawing and engaged while walking), throttle interlock or dead man's finger* (the chain should stop shortly after removing fingers from the throttle).

Chain catcher (in case a broken chain is carried towards the operator).

Muffler (to limit engine noise)*, good conditioned shock absorbers* (these control the hand arm vibration limitations of work) and a kill switch*.

*Also applies to brush cutter and pole saw.

RHYL & St ASAPH ANGLING ASSOCIATION

PPE

Chainsaw and pole saw: Head Protection with visor and ear defenders: These are mandatory for the work and must be to BS EN 397, BS EN 14052 or BS EN 12492 for the helmet, the ear defenders can be BS EN 352-1, BS EN 352-2 or BS EN 352-3, the eye visor should be BS EN 1731, for Brush cutters safety glasses or visors should be to BS EN 166, it is only advised that chainsaw gloves to BS EN 381-7 should be worn, but data from 1994 suggests that more accidents occurred to the hands than legs, yet leg protection is mandatory (see table below), trousers should conform to BS EN 381-5, boots to BS EN ISO 17249.

Brush cutters: Minimum requirements are helmet, visor, ear defenders and suitable foot wear.

Accident Location	Frequency of injury
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Head Injuries	3418 (8%)
Upper body Area	2141 (5%)
Arm and Hand area	17994 (42%)
Leg Area	16348 (38%)
Foot area	2885 (7%)

Accident location and frequency as related to chainsaw use (1994) US Product Safety Commission.

Tool maintenance

Regular saw maintenance increases safety and productivity. Check controls, chain tension, and all bolts and handles to ensure they are functioning properly and adjusted according to the manufacturer's instructions. Properly sharpened teeth will cut quickly, smoothly and more safely. Wear gloves when sharpening the saw teeth.

Check the chain tension and lubrication system for proper function. Proper chain tension helps to ensure long chain life and safer cutting. A chain that is too loose may derail and whip. A chain that is too tight will bind and wear prematurely. All chains stretch with use and frequently need checking and readjusting. Good lubrication helps prolong chain life and maintain tension adjustment. Always ensure there is sufficient chain oil, it should not run out before the petrol tank. Adjust flow according to manufacturer's instructions.

Follow any other routine maintenance in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Read the manual before using a new saw, there may be some instructions on the use and maintenance of the saw which may differ from the saws previously used especially with the new electronically controlled saws.

RHYL & St ASAPH ANGLING ASSOCIATION

Operation

Mixing 2-stroke and Petrol: It is extremely common for chainsaws and brush cutters to be sent back to retailers with engines sent back with damage due to incorrect fuelling. The primary cause of this is using fuel which has been prepared incorrectly mainly by forgetting to add 2-stroke mix. These repairs are extremely expensive often with piston reassembly. There are easy ways to get around this. We use fuel containers of different colours for 2 stroke and straight petrol. The superior orange Husqvarna fuel container is for 2 stroke and a green container for straight petrol. Secondly, we should also be responsible for checking we are using the correct fuel for the machine we are using. The fuel must be stored in a UN approved 5l plastic or up to 20l metal safety can. Cans should have a prominent Petrol and highly flammable warning sign (The Petroleum (Consolidation) Regulations 2014 (PCR), which came into force on 1 October 2014).

Fuelling: Fuel saw outdoors only. Always shut off engine and allow it to cool before fuelling. Fuel the saw at least 3 metres from sources of ignition, preferably in a drip tray, but if not on bare earth. Wipe up any spilled fuel and check for leaks especially around the cap. The chain saw must be started at least 3 metres from the fuelling area. For more information cross reference the COSHH assessment.

Transporting saw: The chain saw should be transported in a level position with the petrol cap up, the bar behind you and the muffler on the side away from you. Carrying the saw with the engine running is dangerous and should be avoided. The saw should never be carried with the engine running unless the chain brake is engaged. Shut off or engage the chain brake whenever the saw is carried on hazardous terrain. The saw should be transported with the bar covered by a chain guard.

Tree felling: Excellent guides are found in all manufacturers' handbooks. The key points are to determine the fall of the tree; look for power cables; clear the area of other people, tools or vehicles especially if felling trees (2 tree lengths is usual); have a cleared escape route at 45° away from the tree as it could fall backwards from the way you want it to fall (135° from intended direction of fall); plan the cuts carefully; fell from the uphill side; ensure nobody is inline of the saw of the chain in case it snaps; trees up to 6 inches can be cut cleanly through with a saw, trees above that should be cut with appropriate felling cuts; plastic or aluminium wedges can be used to increase the leverage of fell (or a felling bar); retreat when the tree starts to fall (chain break on, or leave saw on the ground).