

Everyday Safety

Tailgate Talks

Wood & Brush Chipper Safety

Operating wood chippers can be dangerous for both operators and others working nearby. When employees feed tree limbs and branches into chippers they are at risk of getting caught in the machine and being pulled into the fast-turning chipper knives.

Although the hazards associated with chipper use are generally known, awareness of these hazards and the associated safeguards needs to be highlighted and reinforced.



Before operating wood and brush chippers, it is important to wear proper apparel and PPE:

- Clothing should be close fitting and tucked in. Don't wear loose-fitting clothing like untucked or unbuttoned shirts and jackets or pants with cuffs that could get caught on loose brush and branches.
- Hard hats and ear protection are required.
- Eye protection is also required. It must be ANSI-approved and may consist of glasses, goggles, or a flip-down visor of plastic or mesh.
- Wear good work pants and leather work boots with non-slip soles.
- Gloves are recommended, but gauntlet-style gloves should never be worn as they may snag on branches being fed into the chipper.
- Avoid wearing any kind of jewelry such as earrings, rings, watches, or necklaces that could present a safety hazard.

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Stack brush in a way that makes it easy for the operator to feed the chipper. Allow for a clear feed path. After the pre-start and maintenance checks:

- Designate one or more employees as a safety watch to be stationed near emergency shut-off devices while other employees feed material into the chipper.
- Stand to the side of the infeed chute when feeding material into the chipper. This reduces the “caught-in” hazard and allows quick access to emergency stop devices.
- Keep hands and feet out of the immediate infeed chute area while the chipper is running.
- Push material into feed rollers with a wooden tool or a long branch.
- Feed branches into the chipper butt-end first.
- Place shorter branches on top of longer branches being fed into the chipper.
- Place small debris into trash cans instead of feeding it into the chipper.
- Never stand, sit or climb onto any part of the chipper while it is running.
- Shut down the chipper and remove the ignition key when it is unattended.
- Before starting a chipper, ensure that the chipper’s disc hood is completely closed and latched, and that there are no foreign objects in the infeed area.
- Ensure that the discharge chute is positioned to prevent chips from hitting employees.
- Do not stand in front of the feed table when the chipper is running.
- Check material to be fed to ensure that it is free of metal and other foreign objects.
- Use proper locking pins to immobilize the disc cutting wheel when attempting to clear a clogged chipper chute or changing chipper blades.

Resources and References:

OSHA Health and Safety Bulletin “Hazards of Wood Chippers”

<https://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib041608.html>

CDC Blog Post on Preventing Wood Chipper Fatalities

<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2015/12/17/wood-chippers/>

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