

Chainsaw accident at Truro November 2020



Overview

Sunday 8th November 2020 a vegetation clearance contractor, working on behalf of XYZ Rail & Civils was carrying out clearance using chainsaws near to Truro Level Crossing. The operative was clearing some low-lying vegetation when the chainsaw struck a piece of fence wire, causing the chainsaw to kickback and strike the individual in the neck. This resulted in two lacerations that required urgent medical treatment.

A full investigation is currently underway, following the standing down of works.

The XYZ Rail safety alert asks for consideration of the following points in the use of chainsaws and to prevent kick back:

- **Ensure you are using the right equipment for the task.**
- **Check the chainsaw safety features** before starting works, ensuring all are fitted and in good working order.
- **Ensure you are wearing all task-specific PPE.**
- **Check the working area for any hazards**, don't cut close to fence lines and consider ground conditions - ensure you have good footing and a clear area for cutting.
- **Always ensure good visibility of guide bar and ensure chain is sharpened.** The chain is most effective at high cutting rates, and less prone to kickback.
- **Keep the saw below chest height** and hold it close.
- **Always keep a good grip of the chainsaw with both hands.** Keep the thumb of the left hand around the back of the front handle.
- **Don't over-reach** – do you have the right equipment for the job?
- **Stay alert** – if you feel tired or ill then stop immediately and report to the Person in Charge.
- **Ensure good work positioning**, Chainsaw operatives must maintain a good balanced stance to the side of the saw to reduce risk of injury.

Discussion Points

- a. Has there been a Take 5 approach to check for hazards, think about the activity you will or have undertaken?
- b. Are you sure that everyone involved are all trained and competent to carry out the activity?
- c. Has everyone got the correct PPE for the task?
- d. Is there a safer more effective way of carrying out the task?
- e. What could have gone better and what did go well.

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