



Avoid Serious Incidents! A Focus on Wood Chipper Safety

By: Jenny Porrevecchio, Senior Loss Control Consultant at IRMA

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While the hazards of wood chippers may be obvious, complacency and lack of training can contribute to wood chipper accidents. Therefore, it is important that chipper hazards and safety procedures are regularly reviewed and reinforced. Take stock of your chipper safety programs before one of your employees is involved in an incident.

Follow Manufacturer's Instructions:

- Instructions for proper use, inspection, maintenance, and use of safety devices should be strictly followed.
- Modifications should not be made to the equipment unless approved by the equipment's manufacturer. In addition to approval, work with the manufacturer on additional safety training for the modification if approved. Be prepared that this may be the full responsibility of the employer.
- Make available a copy of the operator's manual to employees and include review of this information in all safety trainings. These manuals should be readily available; Not only are they critical components to any equipment safety training, but they are also one of the first items requested by OSHA inspectors when investigating incidents or conducting unannounced inspections.

Engineering Controls:

- Chipper safety devices are intended to protect operators from accidental contact with moving parts and flying debris. To reduce the risk of caught-in and struck-by incidents, all employees should be aware of the purpose and proper use of the equipment's safety devices. This [OSHA resource on chipper hazards](#) provides a summary and photo of each engineering control device and can be used during tailgate talks to review your internal equipment.
- During initial and refresher training, review each safety device specific to your equipment with all affected employees including feed control bars, bottom feed stop bars, panic bars, emergency pull ropes, feed tray extensions, wooden push tools, flexible rubber curtains, discharge spout deflectors, and chipper hood safety latches. Verify that each employee knows how to use and maintain each component and document training results.
- If your equipment lacks safety devices now standard on new equipment, consider upgrading your chippers with newer models.

Job Safety Analysis:

- Create a detailed JSA for wood chipper operations and regularly review it for necessary updates.
- Does your JSA account for inspection procedures, proper start-up, safe operation, and proper PPE requirements? This [OSHA resource](#) provides checklists, training lessons, knowledge checks, and summarizes safe procedures for feeding materials, which includes:
 - Feed material only when the chipper/shredder is at full operating speed.
 - Feed branches from the side of the chute, not in front of it. This will reduce the risk of you being caught and dragged into the machine. Standing to the side of the equipment will also make it easier for you to reach the emergency shut-off switch in the event of an accident.
 - Keep hands and feet outside of the feed chute. Never break the plane of the bottom of the chute.
 - Use a push stick to help feed small pieces and brush through the chipper/shredder to keep you at a distance from the machine's moving parts. Do not push materials into the chute with your hands or feet, pitch forks, shovels, etc.
 - Let go of material as soon as it begins to be pulled into the machine and walk away to avoid being hit or dragged into the chipper by limbs you are feeding.
 - Feed the branches butt end first to keep the chipper from being jammed and to reduce the kickback of material.
 - Lay shorter pieces of material on top of longer pieces and feed through the machine.
 - Collect small materials such as leaves and twigs and put them with the chipped material instead of feeding them through the chipper/shredder.
- See the [IRMA sample JSA](#) for comparison with your department's procedures.

Training:

- Train all affected employees before initial assignment and conduct refresher training annually.
- Even if the employee received training elsewhere, it is important to provide documented internal training to verify their knowledge and to provide information specific to your equipment and procedures.
- See IRMA's [Self-Paced Training](#) to get started.

Emergency Procedures:

- In accordance with 29 CFR 1910.266 – Logging operations, ensure that employees are trained and equipped to provide emergency response for serious incidents at remote locations. [IRMA's First Aid/CPR Model Policy](#) includes emergency response procedures for remote work, recommended first aid kit contents, and first aid training requirements for logging operations.

As always, be sure to reach out to the [IRMA Risk Management and Training Department](#) with any questions or additional training needs.