



Be a «professional»
in your own woodlot.

Do you give any thought to your safety and your health when felling trees or cutting firewood?

This brochure has been compiled specially for owners of private forests, spare-time tree fellers, farmers, part-time employees, apprentices (agriculture, landscape gardening) and forestry workers (trained or untrained).

Our aim is to:

- Draw your attention to the dangers involved when felling trees and cutting firewood
- Inform you about safety rules and safety measures
- Encourage you to think about your own capabilities and limitations
- Motivate you to pursue further training

We have deliberately omitted any precise descriptions of working techniques. These are best learnt in practical courses. Every type of tree and every situation is different and requires an individual approach. Only when taught by a qualified instructor will you learn how to assess specific situations correctly and to apply the safest working techniques. The normal working techniques and methods are described in the documentation distributed during courses of this type.

This brochure is not intended as a replacement for a tree-felling course. However, it briefly describes and shows what is of particular importance for your safety and your health when felling wood.

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Be a «professional» in your own woodlot

Forestry Section

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1 Wood harvesting is a dangerous job

A look at the accident statistics reveals the following main points:

Sources of accidents	Causes of accidents and their consequences
Felling trees:	Accidents resulting from tree-felling affect the chain-saw operator, his helpers or third parties present. They often result in invalidity or death.
Using a chainsaw to debranch and crosscut logs:	The main causes of accidents are: ■ Failure to recognise tension or compression in branches and logs ■ Wrong positioning of chainsaw operator ■ Incorrect sawing technique ■ Inadequate personal protective equipment
Extracting timber with a winch and a tractor:	The main causes of accidents are: ■ Unsuitable and inadequately equipped winches and tractors ■ Presence of other persons in danger zones ■ Poor communication
Splitting logs with a splitting machine:	Injuries: Jammed and/or crushed fingers and hands Cause: Splitting machines that allow the user to reach between the splitting tool and the log
Sawing firewood with circular saws:	Injuries: Cut off and/or crushed fingers Cause: Circular saws that allow the user to reach into the area of the saw blade
Woodchipping:	Injuries: Limbs cut off, crushed and/or broken Causes: Woodchipping machines that allow the user to reach into the infeed rollers or blades

If timber is harvested by persons who have had no basic training or further training (apprenticeship for forest workers, tree-felling courses), the risk of accidents is usually considerably higher.

2 Prevention is better . . .

Prevent these risks with the appropriate measures.

Most important are:

Technique

- Obtain the correct tools and personal protective equipment.
- Only use the appropriate equipment (tools, machines, accessories).
- Inadequate equipment should be repaired immediately or replaced.

Organization

- Plan, organize and prepare your work.
- Ensure that you can handle an emergency and that first aid is at hand.
- Never work alone.

Persons

- Make sure that you yourself are adequately trained.
- Adhere always to safety rules.
- Wear personal protective equipment.

Training opportunities for chainsaw users:

- Use of chainsaws (2 days, not including tree-felling)
- Chainsaw course (5 days, including tree-felling)
- Wood harvesting course 1 (10 days)

Information and application:

- Cantonal forestry offices (training section)
- Agricultural colleges

An appeal to all persons involved in wood harvesting operations

- Before starting work, think about the operations you are or you are not qualified to do. Remember: Special skills are required for most of the work.

Forestry work is a specialist's job!

- Always carefully observe safety regulations - in your own interest!
- Study the operating instructions for each machine and follow the safety rules.
- Get advice and support from the local forestry service (instruction, assistance in tree-felling, hire of equipment, etc.).



3 Working safely means: Look ahead, think ahead!

Ask yourself the following questions before starting work:

- How am I going to proceed?
- What jobs have to be done?
- In what sequence do they have to be done?
- Who is going to do what?
- Am I adequately trained?
- Which jobs should be left to specialists?
- What equipment do I need?
- What safety measures should be taken?
- How much time will the job take?
- Am I sufficiently prepared and equipped if an accident occurs?
- How am I insured against accidents?
- Is my liability insurance adequate?



4 Are you using the right equipment?

Think in advance about the equipment you need.

Depending on the job, you will need:

- An axe with a protective blade cover (1)
- Hand saw with protective cover
- Billhook (2)
- Measuring stick (3)
- Folding rule, measuring tape
- Breaking bar (4)
- Felling wedge (5)
- Splitting wedges
- Splitting hammer (6)
- Debarking spade (7)
- Turning hook (8)
- Sappie (pointed steel hook mounted on wooden handle) (9)
- Chainsaw with accessories
- (see page 12)
- Extracting equipment: manual winch and accessories (10), forestry tractor fitted with a winch (see page 22)

You will also need

- Equipment to block off or indicate where work is being done (11)
- First-aid material (12)

When **buying a new machine**, insist on being given the relevant operating instructions and a declaration of conformity (written declaration by the manufacturer or the supplier stating that the machine fulfils the relevant safety requirements).



5 Never work alone!

Forestry work involves particular hazards. There are often situations in which you need help:

- When securing a work area
- When carrying out various jobs
- When an accident occurs (first aid, getting assistance)

Working in a group of 2–3 people is the ideal situation.

To stay fit and alert, you should take regular breaks and appropriate food.

Do not drink any alcohol!



6 Are you equipped for an emergency?

An undesirable occurrence – an accident, an insect bite, an acute attack of illness – can affect anyone. Undesirable consequences can often be avoided by taking swift and appropriate action. Therefore:

Never work alone!

Be prepared for calling help:

- Complete an emergency card (Suva number 88042 «Notfallkarte»)
 - Note down important telephone numbers
 - Determine the coordinates of the work area
 - Have mobile phone and/or radio equipment ready

Before starting work, make sure that:

- You carry your pocket first-aid set
- A full first-aid kit is at the work area
- Your alarm system (mobile phone, Rega emergency radio) is ready and that reception has been tested
- You have your updated emergency card with you
- First-aid measures are known

In the event of an emergency:

- Keep calm!
- Get a clear picture of what has happened
 - What has happened exactly?
 - Injured persons, material damage?
- Decide whether:
 - The rescuers are exposed to any risks
 - There is a risk of fire or explosions
 - There is a risk of rock falls
- Take action
 - Protect yourself
 - Get any accident victims out of the danger area
 - Assess the condition of accident victims
- Call for help
- Apply first aid



We need help. Land here!



We need no help.

7 Warning: Do not expose third parties to risk

You will encounter an increasing number of walkers, bikers, joggers, people collecting berries and mushrooms, horse riders as well as other people pursuing recreational activities in the forest. These third parties must not be exposed to the risk of accidents as a result of forestry operations.

In areas where the public has free access, all safety measures must satisfy the Road Traffic Act (RTA), the regulations governing signposting and the cantonal implementation rules.

Forest roads, footpaths and hiking routes that are not for exclusively private use are considered to be public traffic areas.

Discuss your flagging and warning signs with the relevant authority. The brochure «Schutz von Drittpersonen und Sachwerken bei der Waldarbeit» (Suva order number 44027.d) contains the addresses of the relevant authorities.



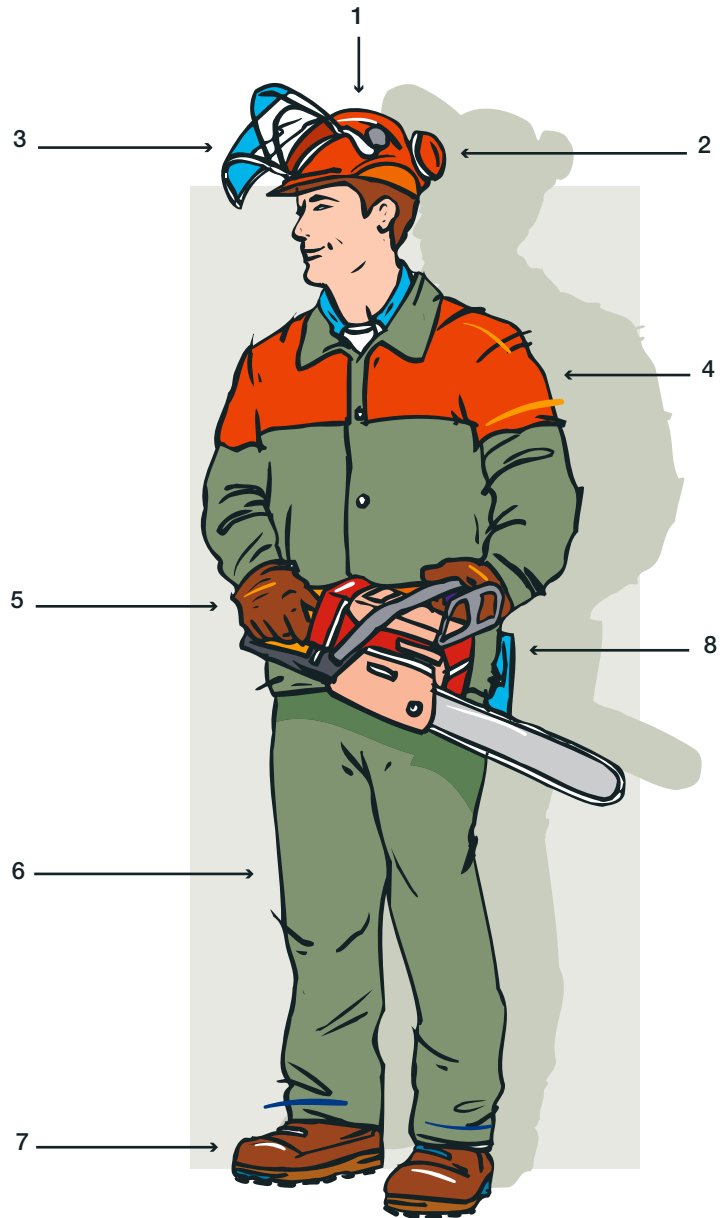
8 You can recognise a professional by his equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is mandatory for all chainsaw users.

It consists of:

- Safety helmet (1)
- Hearing protection (2)
- Eye and face protection (3)
- Protective jacket in a highly visible colour (4)
- Protective nonslip gloves (5)
- Protective trousers/leggings/chaps (6)
- Rugged footwear with antislip soles (7)
- First-aid material (8)

It is decisive that you always wear this equipment when working with a chainsaw.



Protective equipment to be worn when harvesting wood.



Protective equipment to be worn when crosscutting firewood at home.

9 Is your chainsaw OK?

Is your chainsaw fitted with the required safety devices?

- Chain brake with front handle guard (1)
- Throttle control lockout (2)
- Chain catcher
- Rearhandle guard (3)
- Antivibration system
- On/off switch
- Muffler (silencer)
- Safety chain (4)
- Guide bar cover (5)

Before starting work:

- Study the operating instructions (6).
- Make sure that the safety devices are operating correctly.
- See whether the accessories (7) are at hand.

On finishing work:

- Carry out any maintenance work.
- Have any servicing done by a specialist (or the chainsaw dealer).



10 Fuelling a chainsaw safely...

Fuelling a chainsaw can be harmful to your health and to the environment.

Therefore, use

- Special fuel (alkylate gasoline, low-benzol gasoline)
- A combination fuel/chain oil container with a nonspill device (see page 12)
- A service mat (oil-fuel binding agent in the form of synthetic fibre)

When fuelling

- Avoid any open flame nearby
- Do not smoke

Never transport oil, fuel or chainsaws in the same space as persons or food.

Oil and fuel must always be stored in full compliance with fire and environmental protection regulations.



11 ...and starting it safely

Start your chainsaw correctly by holding it firmly

- On the ground or
- Between your legs



12 Always maintain a distance of at least 2 metres when sawing!

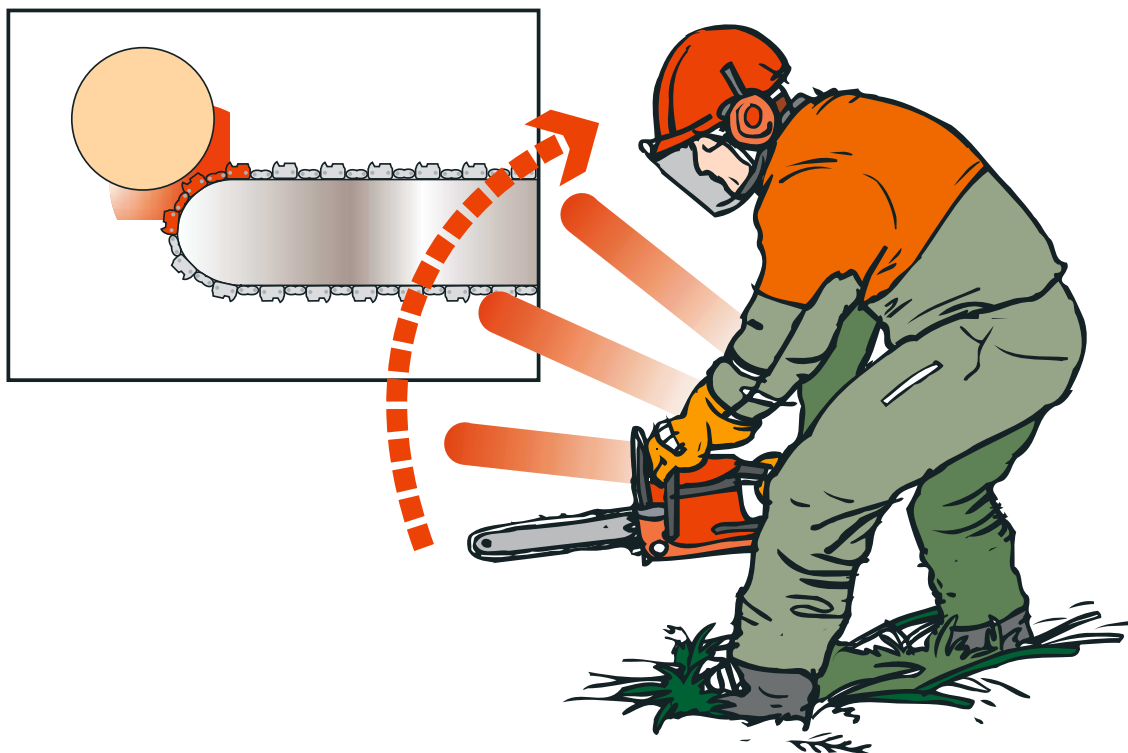
Chainsaws are one-man machines. Only the chainsaw operator may be in the immediate vicinity of the saw when it is running. All other persons must be directed away from the danger zone.

A safety distance of at least 2 metres must be maintained from other persons.



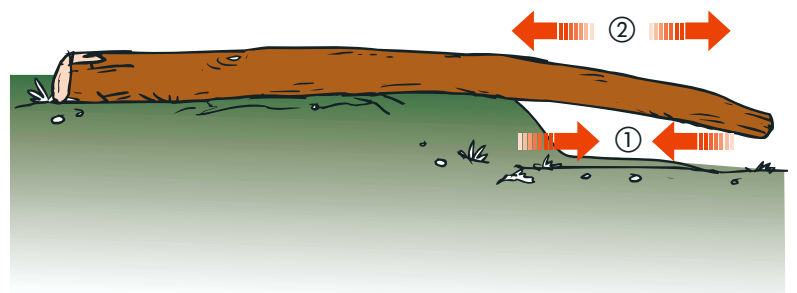
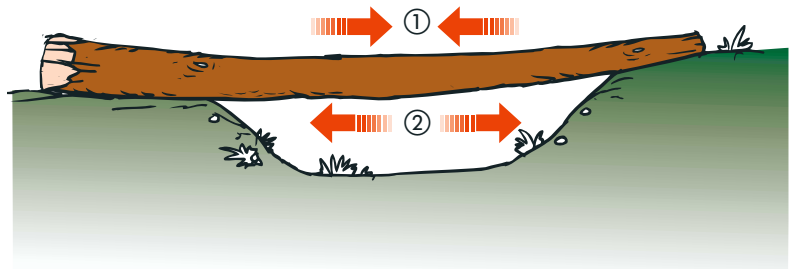
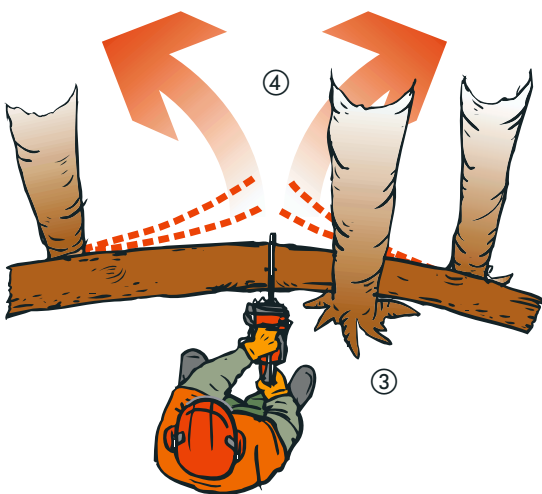
13 When debranching: Hold your chainsaw safely

- Beware of any tension in the branches.
- Adopt a stable stance when sawing.
- Concentrate on the job, operate chainsaw calmly – do not tense your body.
- Grip it with your thumb under the handle.
- Maintain the appropriate safety distance.
- Keep the work area tidy.
- Do not attempt to saw with the tip of the guide bar as there is a risk of kickback of the chainsaw (see illustration).



14 Crosscutting from a stable position

- Assess the situation and consider any risks (including exposure of third parties).
- Take note of any tension in the wood; assess where there are areas under compression (1) or under tension (2).
- Take up a stable position (3); on slopes this is located above the log.
- Keep the danger zones clear (4).
- Use a safe cutting technique.



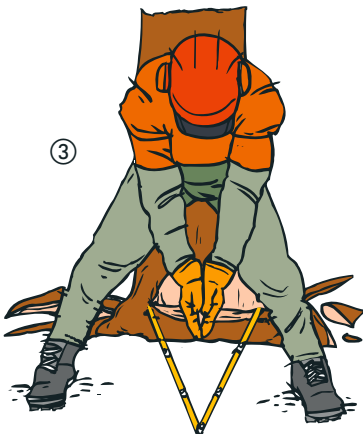
15 Tree-felling is a job for specialists

Tree-felling requires special skills. Make a realistic estimate of your options! Have you received a minimum basic training (wood harvesting course) or have you had several years' practical experience of wood harvesting?

If you are a beginner or have had little experience, forget about felling a tree by yourself and call in a professional.

Felling a tree in the normal way is done as follows:

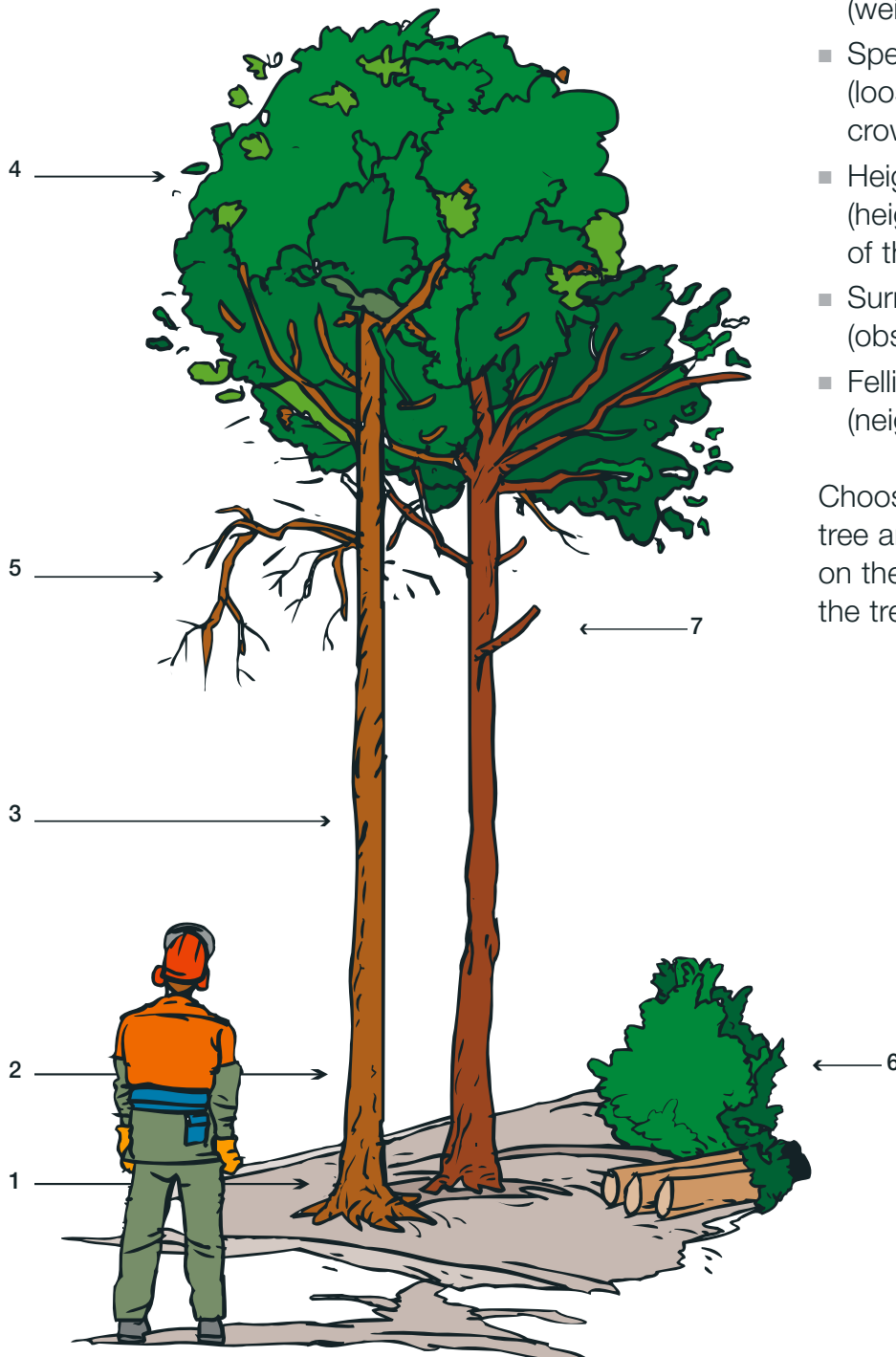
- Assess the tree and its surrounding area (1)
 - Decide on the safest way to fell it
 - Decide on and clear the escape route
- Make the undercut (2)
- Check the direction in which the tree is intended to fall (3)
- Clear all persons out of the tree's falling area and warn persons in the danger zone (see page 20)
- Make the back cut and, at the same time, (4)
 - Observe the tree and its surrounding area
 - Pay attention to dangers that may arise from the felling operation
- Initiate the fall of the tree (5)
 - Use appropriate tools (never use steel wedges!)
- Step back
 - Use your escape route
 - Pay attention to the crown of the tree and to the crowns of neighbouring trees



16 Before felling a tree: Assess the tree and the surrounding area

Every tree is unique. Before felling a tree, you must therefore:

- Carefully assess the tree and its surrounding area
- Select the safest way to fell it and
- Clear your escape route.



The following points must be assessed:

- Base of the tree (1)
(damage, buttresses,...?)
- Type of tree (2)
(diameter, wood properties,...?)
- Shape of the trunk (3)
(direction of lean, fork,...?)
- Crown (4)
(weight distribution, size,...?)
- Special dangers (5)
(loose branches and parts of the crown, dead branches,...?)
- Height of the tree
(height in metres, twice the length of the tree: see page 20,...?)
- Surrounding area (6)
(obstructions, wind,...?)
- Felling direction (7)
(neighbouring trees,...?)

Choose the safest way to fell the tree and determine your escape route on the basis of your assessment of the tree.

17 In the felling direction and the danger zone: Impose strict safety rules

When carrying out tree-felling, the chainsaw user must impose the safety rules without any compromises.

He must

- Clear all persons out of the felling direction (1) before making the back cut
- Warn all persons in the danger zone (2) before making the back cut
- Watch the felling direction and the danger zone regularly or have them watched and issue loud warnings well in advance.

Persons in the danger zone (2)

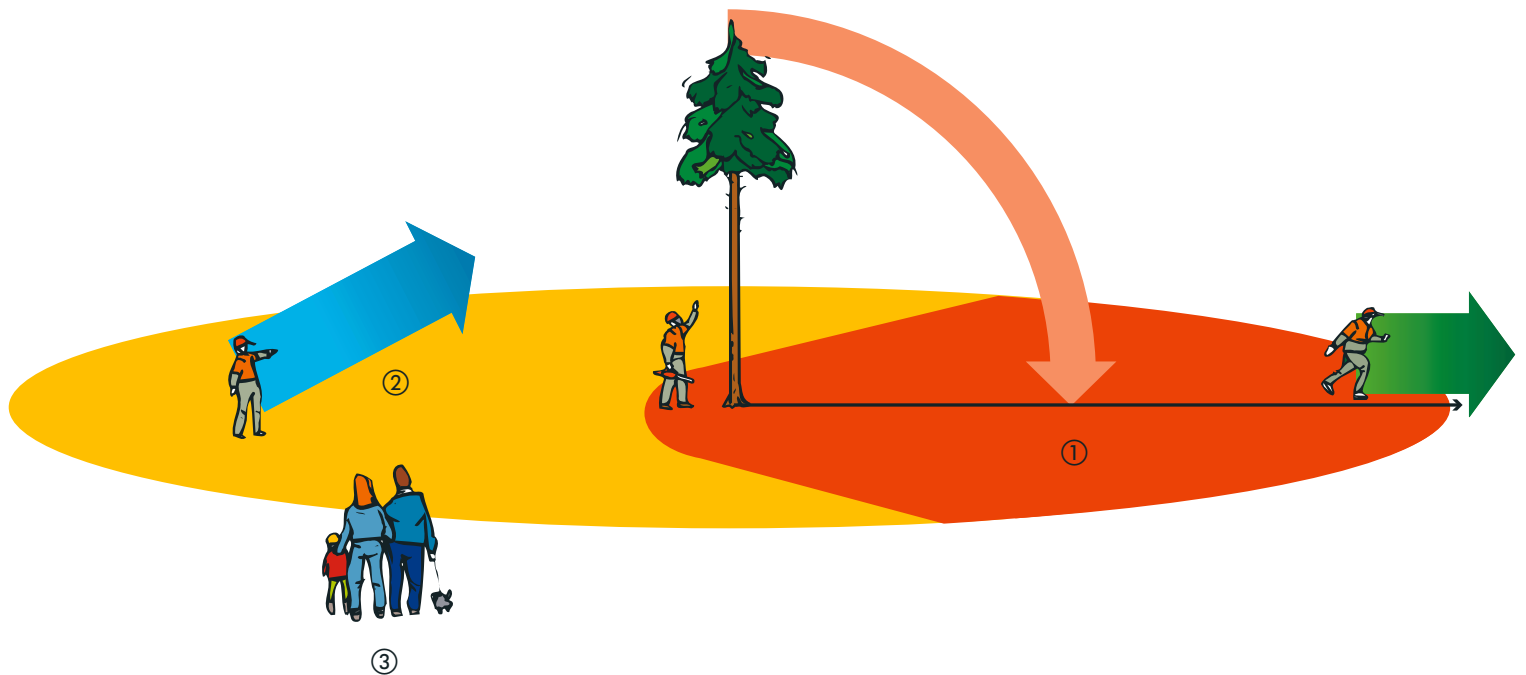
- Must interrupt their work before the back cut is made and must pay attention to dangers that may arise from the felling operation
- May only resume their work when it is no longer dangerous

Persons not involved in the wood harvesting operation (3) must be asked to leave the work area.

N.B.

Tree-felling may only be carried out by people who have received the relevant training.

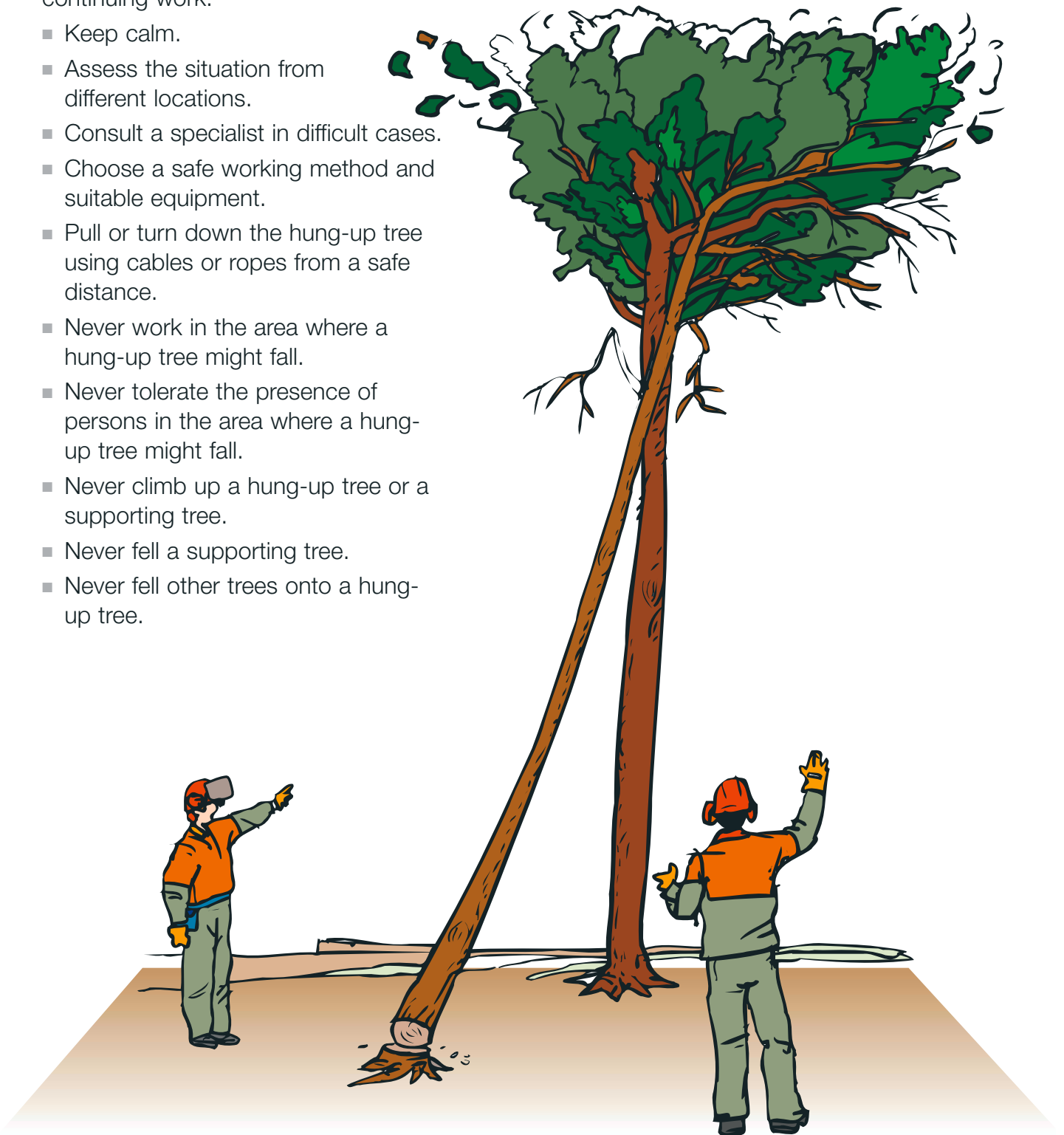
The safety rules given here apply to the felling of trees that are well balanced or are leaning in the intended felling direction («normal situation»).



18 Beware of hung-up trees

Bring down hung-up trees before continuing work:

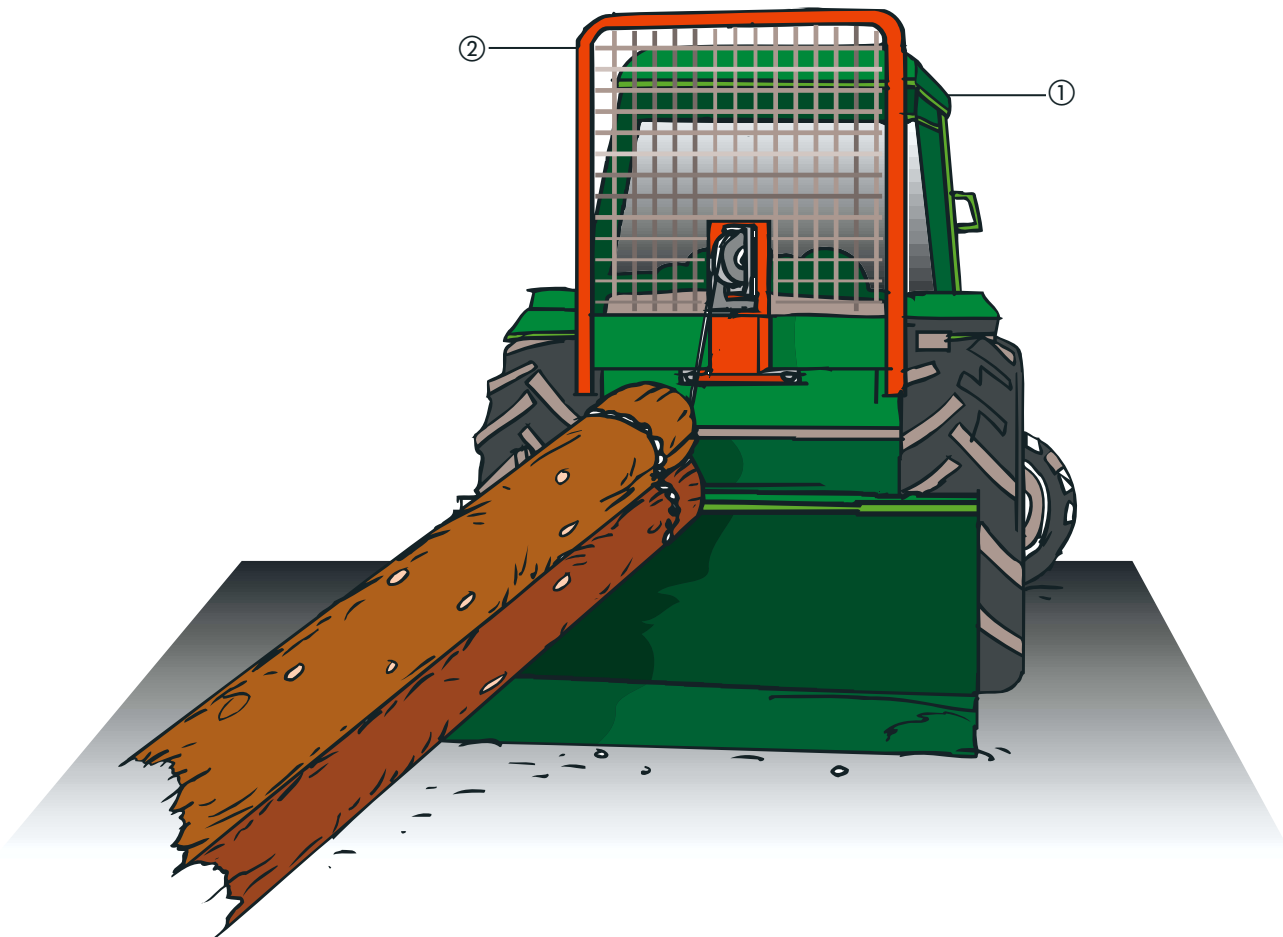
- Keep calm.
- Assess the situation from different locations.
- Consult a specialist in difficult cases.
- Choose a safe working method and suitable equipment.
- Pull or turn down the hung-up tree using cables or ropes from a safe distance.
- Never work in the area where a hung-up tree might fall.
- Never tolerate the presence of persons in the area where a hung-up tree might fall.
- Never climb up a hung-up tree or a supporting tree.
- Never fell a supporting tree.
- Never fell other trees onto a hung-up tree.



19 Does your forestry tractor provide the necessary protection?

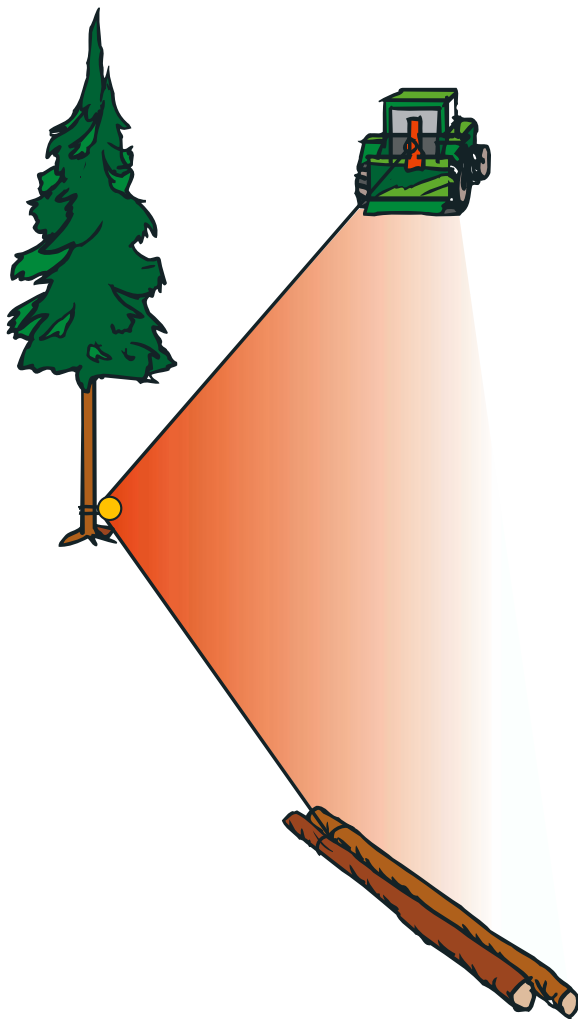
When extracting timber, the operator of the forestry tractor must be specially protected. Ensure that the forestry tractor has the following mandatory safety equipment:

- Safe cabin: safety cabin (1), safety frame or safety bar
- Suitable operator's seat:
 - Absorbing jolts and vibrations
 - Adjustable to suit operator's height and weight
- Rear screen (wire mesh) (2)
 - Full-surface protection for rear of cabin
 - Solid construction
 - Fitted to the cabin or to the winch
- Safe operation of the winch
 - Can be operated from the cabin or from a safe distance
 - Fitted with remote control
 - Fitted with integral safety cut-off
- Protection of power take-off shaft, including guard on tractor end



An adequate amount of storage space will allow you to safely carry pulleys, chocking equipment, cable cutters and other equipment you may need.

20 Extracting timber: Keep a safe distance from tensioned cables, loads and machines!

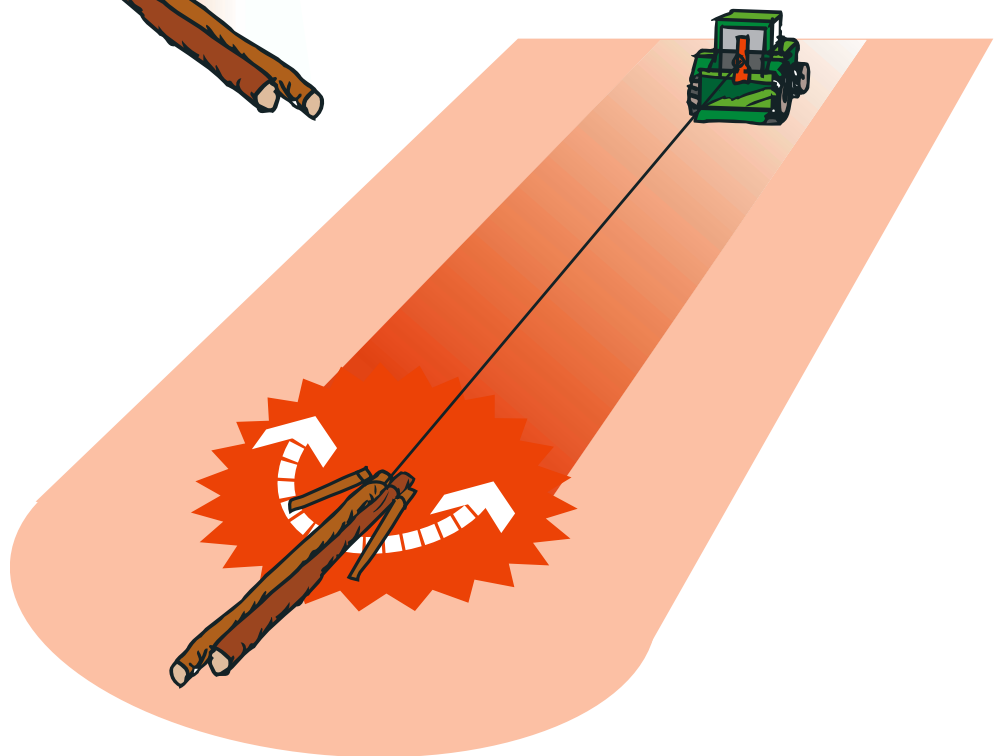


Always keep away from the danger zone around:

- Moving loads (including the zone where loads may swing round!)
- Tensioned and moving cables (particularly from the bight of cables!)
- Machines

N.B.

Riding on forestry tractors is only permitted if the vehicle is fitted with passenger seats or facilities for standing and holding on.



21 Splitting logs: Only use safe machines!

Accidents that occur when working on log-splitting machines often have serious consequences, such as the loss of a finger or an entire hand.

Safe log-splitting machines have the following features:

- No risk of getting hands or feet caught in the machine.

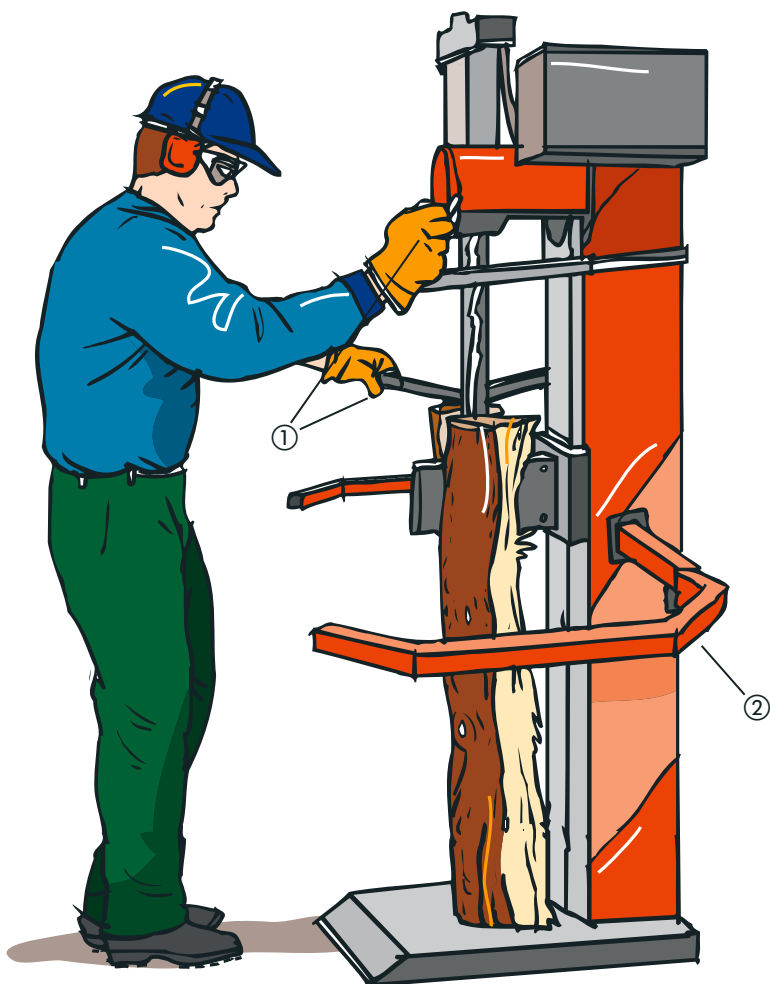
There is no risk of getting caught in a machine if the operator has to place both hands on the operating levers and can set the wood in position at the same time when splitting a log (1). As a result, no hand is free to get between the wood and the splitting tool or between the wood and the wood support. (One-handed operation of log-splitting machines is only permissible on machines that are completely covered by a hood.)

- There must be no risk of injury from flying or falling pieces of wood (2).
- Guards must be fitted to all drive components (belts or power take-off).

When **buying a new machine**, insist on being given the relevant operating instructions and a declaration of conformity (see page 7). Test the machine before buying it.

Personal protective equipment required when working on a log-splitting machine:

- Hearing protection
- Eye and face protection
- Close-fitting and comfortable working clothes
- Working gloves
- Rugged footwear with antislip soles



22 Sawing logs: With circular saws fitted with rocking frame or sliding feed table!

Firewood can be sawn on a variety of machines.

The safest machines are

- **Sliding table circular saws** that are equipped with an infeed device, and
- **Rocking frame circular saws** (see illustration).

These have the following advantages:

- In the starting position, the saw blade is covered by the guard
- When sawing, the infeed device prevents the operator from reaching into the saw blade.

The following machines can only be used to saw firewood to a limited degree:

- **Table circular saws.** When making ripping cuts, they must be fitted with a riving knife and a guard that can be adjusted to suit the diameter of the log.

Less well-suited are:

- Bandsaws, since the saw blade is not always fixed in the best possible place when sawing firewood and the saw blade suffers badly when sawing dirty wood.

When **buying a new machine**, insist on being given the relevant operating instructions and a declaration of conformity (see page 7). Test the machine before buying it.



Personal protective equipment required when sawing firewood:

- Ear protection
- Eye and face protection
- Closefitting and comfortable working clothes
- Working gloves
- Rugged footwear with antislip soles

A **tidy work area** will reduce the risk of falling and make work easier.

23 Woodchipping: Watch the infeed!

Woodchipping machines are used to reduce branches and bushes to woodchips. This operation can be done safely if the following rules are observed:

Saw up twisted branches that are large in diameter. If you do this, the wood will be thrown about less when it is fed into the machine and you save yourself the bother of lifting heavy loads. Make the saw cuts at an angle of about 45 degrees (see illustration). This makes it easier for the material to pass through the infeed rollers.



Only use safe woodchipping machines that fulfil the following conditions:

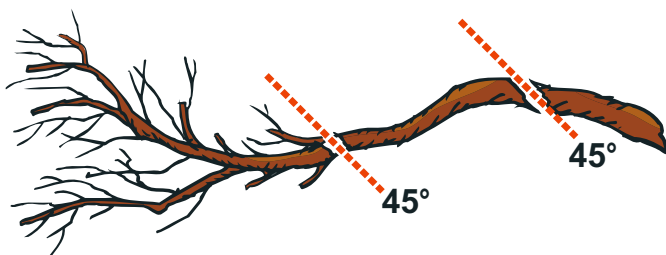
- Infeeding can be stopped at any time by a control lever (1)
- The infeed funnel excludes manual access to the infeed rollers

Despite all these measures, you must expect chopped-up material to be thrown out as well as branches that will thrash around. For this reason, do not stand directly behind the infeed funnel. It is also absolutely essential to wear the following personal protective equipment:

- Ear protection
- Head protection (helmet)
- Face and eye protection (only goggles will protect you from dust)
- Closefitting and comfortable working clothes
- Working gloves
- Rugged footwear with antislip soles

Also make sure that no other persons are in the danger zone.

When **buying a new machine**, insist on being given the relevant operating instructions and a declaration of conformity (see page. 7). Test the machine before buying it.



24 Transporting firewood: Hazards are often underestimated

Even if it is «only» a matter of transporting firewood, you must always go through this check-list:

- Does the driver have a driving licence for the vehicle category concerned?
- Is the vehicle serviceable and roadworthy?
 - Are the lights and the direction indicators in working order?
 - Can the trailer brake be operated from the tractor unit?
 - Are the tyres suitable for heavy terrain?

A reminder: a cubic metre of stacked wood weighs:

Beech, green: approx. 750 kg,
dry: approx. 540 kg

Fir, green: approx. 700 kg,
dry: approx. 340 kg

- Is the vehicle's actual operating weight (weight empty + load) greater than the maximum permissible weight listed in the vehicle's papers?
- Is the load properly secured?
The use of clamping belts is recommended.
- Do passengers only ride on the vehicle if it is fitted with passenger seats or facilities for standing and holding on?
- Do you avoid transporting firewood when forest roads are wet or covered with leaves, ice or snow?
- Do all those persons involved know who is liable in case of an accident if the vehicle has been hired?



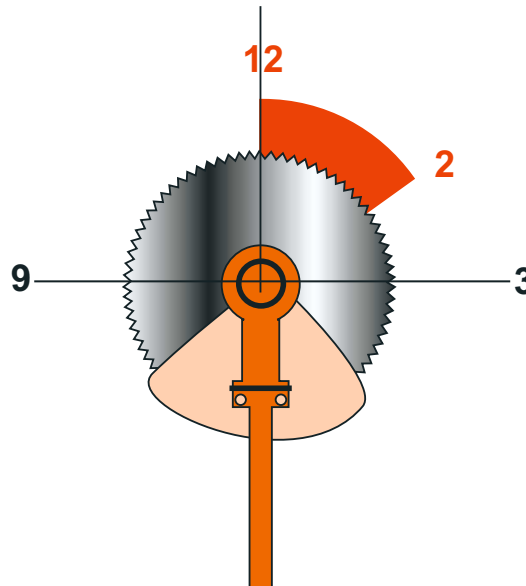
25 Are you working safely with your clearing saw?

- You need personal protective equipment when working with a clearing saw. Dependent on the hazards involved, this consists of:
 - Safety helmet
 - Ear protection
 - Eye and face protection
 - Close-fitting and comfortable working clothes (with a brightly-coloured jacket when working in forests)
 - Working gloves
 - Rugged footwear with anti-slip soles
 - First-aid material
- Read the operating instructions carefully before starting work.
- Before starting your clearing saw, make sure that all the devices important for safety are fitted and in working order:
 - Throttle control lockout
 - On/off switch
 - Blade guard and cover
 - Cutting tool (visual check)
 - Adjustable carrying strap with quick-release connector
 - Blade nut and counter nut on the cutting equipment
 - Transport protection



- When refuelling, take the same safety precautions as you do with a chainsaw (see page 13).
- When working, always maintain a distance of 15 metres between yourself and other persons.
- When a clearing saw is used carelessly, the cutting tool (saw blade) can kick back.

For this reason, avoid cutting in the critical «12 to 2 o'clock» area (see illustration).



26 Safety rules apply to everyone – even in your own woodlot!

The safety rules for forestry work apply not only to professionals employed in forestry operations but also to all persons involved in forestry work. Even when working in your own woodlot.

Spare-time tree fellers

«Spare-time tree fellers» are those who only do forestry work in their spare time. They are subject to the same safety rules that apply to regular forestry employees. The safety rules to be observed (technical rules) are described in the machines' operating instructions, such as the operating instructions for a chainsaw.

If safety rules are not respected during spare-time wood harvesting and an accident occurs, the insurance benefits may be reduced. The accident insurance law (UVG) provides the following reasons for reductions:

- In cases of gross negligence (Art.37, § 2, UVG)
- In the case of violations, for example, when an official prohibition is ignored (Art.37, § 3, UVG)
- When taking risks (Art.50, UVV*)

Farmers

Farmers usually look after their own woodlot or those of other owners as self-employed persons. As a result, the safety regulations that are in place for the protection of employees cannot be imposed in advance.

However, if an accident occurs, the accident insurance agency can make use of any relevant safety rules for the purpose of assessing the case and, dependent on the insurance contract, can decide whether the insurance benefits should be reduced.

In the case of injuries to third parties, too, it is often important to establish whether the safety rules have been adhered to (liability).

Accidents involving serious injuries are also investigated by the authorities. Investigating magistrates generally consider the safety rules that apply to the protection of employees.

Conclusion

Getting information about all applicable safety rules and adhering to them is always worthwhile from both a legal as well as a financial viewpoint. However, the most important matter is that nothing happens to you when harvesting wood and that you stay healthy.

* UVV = Regulation governing accident insurance

27 Additional publications

Suva and EKAS (Swiss Coordinating Committee for Occupational Safety) publications

2134.d	EKAS-Richtlinie Waldarbeiten
44011.d	Unfallgefahren und Sicherheitsregeln beim Fällen von Bäumen
44027.d	Schutz von Drittpersonen und Sachwerten bei der Waldarbeit
44051.d	Vorsicht bei Zeckenstich
44058.d	Wald – Sicherheit ist machbar! 8 authentische Unfälle (Beispielsammlung 1)
44063.d	Wald – Sicherheit ist machbar! 6 authentische Unfälle (Beispielsammlung 2)
44064.d	Baum- und Umgebungsbeurteilung. Damit Sie die sicherste Fällmethode wählen.
44070.e	Dealing with windblown trees
55029.d	Obligatorische Schutzausrüstung für Motorsägeführer (Kleinplakat A4)
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