



Eastern and Southern Region

Safety and Risk Management



Safety Bulletin

Date: April 10th, 2026

R8/R9-FAM-SM-2026-04-10

Subject: Chainsaw and Crosscut Operations

Topic: As the 2026 field season progresses across Regions 8 and 9, several chainsaw-related accidents have already been reported. With ongoing wildfire and prescribed fire responses, along with efforts to open trails and recreation areas throughout the Eastern and Southern Regions, it is critical for all personnel involved in saw operations to pause and recognize the inherent risks associated with this work. Individuals should ensure they are fully present—both mentally and physically—before beginning any cutting activities.

What to do:

1. Before beginning any saw operation, whether for a project or a single hazard tree, complete a JHA or RA, conduct a tailgate safety briefing for the day's work, and confirm you have a viable medical and communication plan.
2. Ensure all personnel engaged in sawing operations have received the appropriate, up-to-date training and maintain current qualifications for the tasks they are performing.
3. Verify that all required PPE is in good condition and being used, and that all equipment safety features are functioning properly.
4. **Treat every cut as a potentially hazardous situation. Experience can lead to complacency—mitigate hazards before starting, and reassess if conditions change.**
5. Monitor your physical and mental status throughout the day, especially as fatigue sets in. If something doesn't feel right—either with the situation or yourself—communicate it, switch out sawyers, or postpone the task.
6. Look out for one another. If you notice someone appears fatigued, distracted, or misses a hazard, stop operations and have a conversation.

What to know:

Accidents occur in this line of work because the tasks are critical and inherently hazardous. The pressure to “get it done,” combined with fatigue, can lead to hasty decisions and preventable incidents.

For more information, contact Dan McLaughlin, Eastern Region and Acting Southern Region Saw Program Manager, at Daniel.McLaughlin@usda.gov.