



Burlington Fire Department

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Section: 03 - Safety	
SOG Number: 03.10	Effective Date: Feb. 7, 2020
Subject: Operating Power Saws	
By Order of Fire Chief Steven A. Locke	

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this operating guideline is to ensure safe and efficient operation of power saws.

II. Scope:

This SOG is directed to all members of the Burlington Fire Department who may use a power saw.

III. Definitions:

Chainsaw: A mechanical power-driven cutting tool with teeth set on an endless chain which moves around the edge of a stationary guide bar.

Operator: The person in control of the power saw

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Equipment to include eye protection, hearing protection and gloves (at minimum). May include full turnout gear depending on situation.

Power Saw: A mechanical power-driven hand held cutting tool which uses a chain with teeth or a circular spinning blade.

Rescue Saw (Rotary Saw, aka K-12): A high speed motorized cutting tool that uses a circular spinning blade with some sort of cutting or abrasive edge to cut through various materials.

IV. Guidelines:

A). Personal Protection

1. PPE shall be worn by those members operating power saws as well as members in close proximity to the operation of a power saw.
2. Clothing or turnout gear must be secured in a way that there are no loose pieces that may become entangled in the saw.
3. Eye protection must be worn while operating power saws. Acceptable methods of eye protection include the use of an SCBA facepiece or protective eye glasses. Face shields on firefighting helmets provide minimal protection and should be considered a last resort for eye protection.
4. Power saws shall not be used in areas where flammable gases are possible.

B). Operation

1. When starting a power saw, the preferred method is to have the saw on the ground. If a ground start is not possible, use the “handle between the legs” method. “Drop starts” should be avoided.
2. It is best to carry a power saw with the motor turned off. If a chainsaw must be carried while the motor is running, the chain brake shall be engaged. If a rescue saw must be carried while the motor is running, extreme caution must be used and the blade must face away from the operator.
3. Keep both hands firmly on the handlebar and rear handle with fingers wrapped around them when operating power saws.
 - a. To engage the chain brake on a chainsaw, use the “wrist roll” method. This allows the operator to maintain full grip on the handlebar and prevents possible injury due to the operator’s hand coming in contact with the chain.
 - b. To disengage the chain brake on a chainsaw, keep thumb wrapped around the handlebar and reach with fingers to pull the brake lever back.
4. Whenever possible, power saws should be used in teams of two members. This makes it possible for one member to be the operator and the other to act as a guide/assistant.
5. Hand signals or member to member contact should be considered as signaling methods when hearing is reduced due to engine noise.
6. No saw shall be operated without the proper guards in place. Depth gauges, where available shall be set prior to the cut.
7. Power saws shall not be left unattended while the motor is running.
8. When operating power saws, always have a means of egress from the area of operation.

9. Have a plan of action before putting a power saw into operation including:
 - a. Location and sequence of cuts to be made.
 - b. Wind direction in relation to the operator's location.
 - c. Bring support tools (Irons, hook) in addition to the power saw.
10. Enter all cuts at full rpm and regulate the speed of the saw by increasing or decreasing throttle.
11. Operating a power saw above chest height is hazardous and should be avoided unless necessary. During cutting operations the power saw should be kept as low as possible. This action is safer and reduces fatigue.
12. The use of power saws from ladders is not recommended if there are alternatives.
13. Power saws are designed to be used to make straight line cuts. Avoid twisting or torquing the blade or bar and chain. This can cause failure which can lead to serious injury.
14. Cuts should be made only as deep as necessary. Cutting too deep may weaken structural components.
15. Some situations may require preparing the surface to be cut. This may include removing gravel or rubber from a roof deck.
16. Rescue (Rotary) Saws:
 - a. The blade should be kept at a right angle to the surface being cut. This is easily accomplished by setting the saw on the surface and pulling the saw through the material to be cut.
 - b. Rotary Saws exhibit a gyroscopic effect caused by the spinning blade. This can make the saw somewhat unwieldy when changing its cutting angle or when using upright.
 - c. Release the throttle and immediately remove the blade from the cutting surface if binding occurs to avoid belt damage.
 - d. Always use the lower portion of the blade for cutting purposes. If the upper portion of the blade is used for cutting, the blade may start climbing in the cut and throw the saw up and back towards the operator.
 - e. The blade on a circular saw will continue to spin at high RPM after the throttle is released. This should be stopped by resting in to the material to allow it to stop.
 - f. When using a rescue saw to open metal buildings, caution should be used around sharp edges created by the cut. These can injure or cut hoselines.

C). Fueling and maintenance

1. When handling fuel and refueling saws:
 - a. The saw shall never be refueled while the motor is running.
 - b. Verify the correct fuel and oil type to be used.

- c. If fuel is spilled during refueling, wipe off saw before starting.
- d. Avoid ignition sources in the area when refueling.

V. Responsibilities:

- A). It is the responsibility of all members to read, understand and follow this Standard Operating Guideline
- B). It is the responsibility of the drivers of apparatus carrying power saws to ensure that they are in a state of readiness at the beginning of each shift.
- C). It is the responsibility of the operator to use the saw in a safe and efficient manner.

Revision History			
Revision Date	Section	Summary	Principal Author
A		Initial Release of updated document.	SFF Aaron Macbeth/BC Ruggles