

Safety NEWSLETTER

provided by
The Safety Council
of East Texas
as a service to its members

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"Working together for a safer tomorrow"

Hurricane's Deadly Legacy

Tree Cutting a Common Source of Tragedy in Ike

In last month's safety newsletter, we explored one of the two main causes of death in the city of Houston resulting from hurricane Ike - carbon monoxide poisoning. This month, we explore the other big killer - accidents involving cutting trees. Ike is gone, but with the approach of winter, hundreds of East Texans will take to the woods, seeking not only a cord or two of firewood, but also the powerful feeling that comes from wielding one of the biggest, baddest, and loudest of our arsenal of power tools - the chain saw. Tragically, every year a handful of these adventures end in tragedy as inexperience, a lack of preparation, and failure to pay attention to detail lead to a tree or limb pinning an unsuspecting victim in a death grip.

On September 12, 2008, hurricane Ike claimed its first victim when a 10 year old Montgomery County boy was killed when a dead tree his father was cutting prior to the storm's arrival fell on him. He was just the first of several people who died working with trees in their yards.

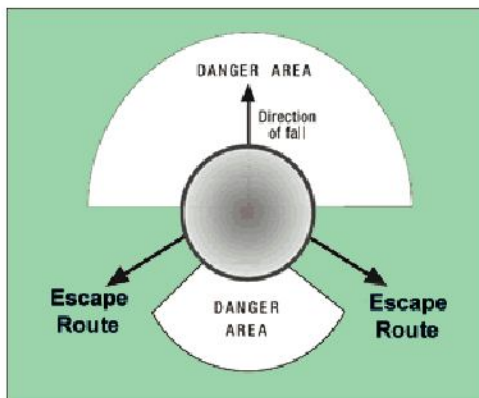
Part of the reason this activity is so hazardous is that there are so many different ways to be injured. There's frequently a need to get up off the ground to reach a limb to cut. Sometimes there's a temptation to get into an awkward position. Then there are the dangers of the saw itself. Add in the uncertainty of how a tree is going to fall, the lack of good footing in many instances, and the physical exertion that's required, and it's a recipe for disaster. Yet it can be done safely if some ground rules are established and never broken. Here are some of the key ones:

1) **Know your limits:** Cutting down a rouge sapling that shot up in your azalea bed is a totally different experience than felling a 100 ft. pine tree that shades most of your's and your neighbor's yards. Keep an objective view of your skill level and



don't get out of your league. Playing a too-difficult golf course can embarrass you. Cutting too big a tree can kill you. Leave the big ones to the pros.

2) **Plan ahead:** Examine the tree. Based on it's structure, which way will it fall naturally? Are there any power lines, ropes, or other trees that it may snag on its way down? Which way is the wind blowing? Are there dead sections that may make the tree go a different direction? Do you have a clear escape route at a 45 degree angle away from the direction the tree will fall? What will you do if the tree doesn't fall where you think it will? How will you make sure all people in the area are accounted for?



3) **Position yourself:** The words "ladder" and "chain saw" don't belong in the same sentence. Make sure your feet are planted solidly on good ground.

Wear personal protective equipment. Check your escape route again. If you're felling a tree, when it starts to fall, calmly turn off the saw, set it down, and quickly retreat along your escape route. Stay away until the tree has completely stopped moving. When limbing, stay uphill of the work so it won't roll onto you.

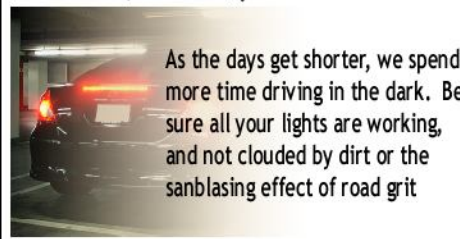
4) **Cut properly:** Use good technique (see recommended links) to make your cuts. Take steps to prevent saw kickback.

**ARE YOU A
DEFENSIVE
DRIVER?**

Go with the Flow

Traveling at a significantly different speed - slower or faster - than the vehicles around you makes it more dangerous for everybody. Maintaining a comparable speed keeps closing distances manageable and avoids running up on other cars, which leads to rear end collisions.

SAFETY CHECK Of the month



As the days get shorter, we spend more time driving in the dark. Be sure all your lights are working, and not clouded by dirt or the sandblasting effect of road grit



**Frying a turkey
for Thanksgiving?**

Watch for hot oil burns!

For more info on chain saw safety,
http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/safety_haz/chainsaws/sawoperations.html

<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/ageng/safety/ae1025w.htm>