

## Chainsaw Cut to Protective Clothing

### What happened?

Whilst clearing vegetation from a roadside ditch, a chainsaw operator made contact with the running chain of his chainsaw and the outer fabric of his protective chainsaw trousers. No injury was sustained.

The incident occurred towards the end of the shift, during the worksite final walk over and tidy up.

The operator went to cut back a visually protruding stump approximately 300mm high by 30mm in diameter, which had been left earlier by another team member.

It is presumed that the stump had been left high because the initial operator had identified the immediate rocky back drop and did not want to risk 'kick back' or damage to his chain if he caught the rock, or risk slipping if he over reached to cut it cleanly.

The operator positioned himself in the ditch to adopt a steady footing and with his left leg raised to steady himself, he cut out the stump at full arms reach. Whilst retracting back with the saw over his left leg the running down chain made contact with the operators left thigh.

Due to the operators left arm being at full reach he had been unable to operate the brake with the back of his left hand until retracting the saw.

Had the operator engaged the chain brake at the first opportunity the incident may not have occurred.



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## General Discussion

The operators colleague knew there was an issue regarding the stump, further communication between the team may have highlighted the risk and allowed for further assessment to be made.

When considering how to deal with specific issues, we should always be asking ourselves:

### **Elimination** *do we even need to do this?*

Did the stump have to be removed? Was it clear of the ditch and was it just aesthetically an issue? We thrive to ensure we deliver high standards and quality work to our clients but even on the smallest scale we must consider risk.

### **Substitution** *is this the right tool for the job?*

Was there a viable alternative to the use of a chainsaw? Could the stump have been removed with a silky type hand saw or good quality loppers?

Arborists routinely use silky saws when the complexity and dexterity afforded by them commands it and can be the most effective and safest option – there are multiple scenarios where this is true of ground work.



### **Control** *what else can I do to control the risk?*

The operator knew there was increased risk in overreaching. Could they have carried out a controlled 'dry run' without triggering the saw to help highlight any catch points and establish if he was able to effectively engage the chain brake at that extent of reach? Was his chain tension correct? Tight enough to stop the chain from running on after the trigger was no longer being activated?

### **PPE** *is it appropriate and fit for purpose?*

Discard and replace any PPE immediately that has sustained any damage, where the ability to continue to protect the operator is compromised or uncertain regardless of cost or implication. It is not enough to just have the right PPE, we must ensure we maintain its condition and effectiveness throughout its use.