Chainsaw Safety

Checklist & Quick Reference Guide

A practical guide for safe chainsaw operation in Park County, Colorado

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1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Checklist

NEVER operate a chainsaw without complete PPE. Check every item before starting work.

PPE Item	Why It Matters	✓
Hard Hat or Helmet	Protects from falling branches and debris	■
Face Shield or Safety Glasses	Guards against flying chips, sawdust, debris	■
Hearing Protection	Chainsaws exceed 100 dB — permanent damage risk	■
Heavy-Duty Work Gloves	Firm grip and hand protection	■
Chainsaw Chaps or Pants	Kevlar/ballistic fiber jams chain on leg contact	■
Steel-Toed Boots	Foot protection and stable ankle support	■
Long-Sleeved Shirt (snug fit)	Nothing loose that could catch the chain	■

2. Fire Safety Equipment Checklist

REQUIRED BY LAW: Have all items present and accessible whenever operating a chainsaw in Park County.

Equipment	Specification	✓
Fire Extinguisher or Water System	7 lb. ABC extinguisher (minimum) OR 2½-gallon pressurized water system	■
Pointed Shovel	Large, full-size pointed shovel for quick dirt application	■
Spark Arrestor	USDA or SAE-approved, properly installed on chainsaw muffler	■

Burn Ban Status — Check Before Every Use

Condition	Chainsaw Use	Equipment Required?
No Burn Ban	✓ Allowed	Strongly Recommended
Burn Ban in Effect	✓ Allowed	**REQUIRED BY LAW**

Check current status: parkcountyco.gov | Sign up for alerts: Park County CodeRED

3. Pre-Operation Safety Inspection Form

Complete EVERY TIME before starting. Date: _____ Location: _____

PART A — Equipment Inspection

■ Chain tension: Pulls away from bar slightly, snaps back into place

■ Chain sharpness: Sharp — dull chains increase kickback risk

■ Bar oil level: Adequate lubrication visible

■ Guards in place: Hand guard, chain brake, throttle lock all functional

■ Spark arrestor: Clean and properly installed (required by law)

■ Handles and controls: No cracks, damage, or loose components

■ Fuel mixture: Correct gas-to-oil ratio (see owner's manual)

■ No leaks: Fuel and oil seals intact

PART B — Work Area Assessment

■ Weather: Wind speed/direction noted, humidity observed

■ Burn ban status: Confirmed current status — equipment requirements met

■ Escape routes: Two clear paths planned at 45° angles from expected fall zone

■ Overhead hazards: Scanned for dead branches ('widow makers') and power lines

■ Ground conditions: Stable footing, no trip hazards, slope assessed

PART C — Fire Safety Setup

■ Fire extinguisher/water: Positioned within immediate reach (not at vehicle)

■ Shovel: Accessible and ready for immediate use

■ Location known: Address or GPS coordinates confirmed for emergency response

■ Cell phone: Charged with confirmed signal at work site

■ Help available: Second person present if possible

■ STOP IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THESE APPLY:

- You feel rushed or pressured
- Weather is deteriorating
- Fatigue or loss of focus is setting in
- Any equipment malfunction
- Anything feels 'off' — trust your instincts

4. Quick Reference Card

Essential Safety Rules

Rule	Detail
TWO-HANDED OPERATION	Always. Firm grip — thumbs wrapped around both handles.
NEVER CUT ABOVE SHOULDERS	Keep saw at a safe, controlled working height.
FULL THROTTLE DURING CUTS	Reduces kickback risk. Never cut at low RPM.
AVOID KICKBACK ZONE	Top quarter of bar tip — never deliberately cut there.
CHAIN BRAKE ENGAGED	When not actively cutting. Always engaged at rest.
BODY LEFT OF CUTTING PLANE	Kickback travels up and right — stay out of the path.
PLAN EVERY CUT	Know where the bar will go if wood shifts or breaks.
SHUT OFF WHEN MOVING	Even short distances — saw off between cuts.
CARRY BAR POINTING BEHIND	Never carry the saw with bar pointing forward.
WHEN IN DOUBT — STOP	No cut is worth an injury or a wildfire.

Emergency Contacts

EMERGENCY (Injury / Fire)	911
Park County Burn Ban Status	parkcountyco.gov
Emergency Alerts	Park County CodeRED (link on FAPC website)
Fire Dept Non-Emergency	[Local number]