WHS DOCUMENTS & TEMPLATES

DOC-CHS-PACK · Chainsaw Safety & Competency Pack

Product Overview

For: Businesses whose workers use chainsaws for cross-cutting, limbing and basic felling: owners, supervisors, WHS advisers and workplace assessors

Version 1.0 · 9 November 2026

Editable chainsaw safety documents that work together: a safe work instruction, a pre-start checklist, a VOC and a supervisor's field verification.

Chainsaw injuries are severe: cuts to legs and hands, kickback to the face and neck, and people struck by falling timber. A course certificate does not show that an operator checks the saw, wears the PPE and cuts safely at your site, or knows when a job is for a specialist. A verification of competency is how a business checks that, and keeps a record of it.

This pack answers three questions. The safe work instruction tells the operator what to do and when to stop. The VOC checks they can do it. The field verification checks the controls are working on site. A pre-start checklist is the link used every time.

No licence is needed to use a chainsaw under WHS or OHS laws. The business must make sure each operator is trained and competent for the work they do, and many businesses and sites require a unit of competency for chainsaw operation. Felling beyond basic small trees, trees under tension, hazardous or damaged trees, and work at height in trees are specialist work for trained and experienced arborists or fallers: this VOC does not cover them. A VOC is the business's own check that an operator can work safely at its site: it is not a licence and it is not a nationally recognised qualification.

SAMPLE

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Chainsaw Safe Work Instruction

How to work safely with [Make and model] at [Site name]

Document number		**Version**	
Site		**Work area**	
Approved by		**Review date**	

1 Purpose and scope

This instruction sets out how to use **[Make and model]** safely at **[Site name]** for cross-cutting, limbing and basic felling of small trees: the checks before use, the hazards and controls, the steps, and the points where the operator must stop. Specialist felling is not covered.

It applies to every operator at the site, including contractors and hire users. It does not replace the manufacturer's operating instructions. Where they differ, follow the manufacturer and tell your supervisor, so this instruction can be corrected.

2 Who may do the work

- Has a current VOC for this work, and any licence or training the work needs
- Has been authorised by **[Supervisor name]** to do the work at this site
- Is fit for work, and has read this instruction and signed the acknowledgement at the end

Licence

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3 The equipment

Fill in one copy for each item of equipment, or list each one this instruction covers.

Make and model: [Make and model]	
Equipment ID: [Equipment ID]	
Attachments or accessories used	
Manufacturer's operating instructions kept at: [Operator's manual location]	

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Chainsaw VOC Assessment Tool

Verification of competency for one operator, on the chainsaw in scope, at [Site name]

Purpose	To check, and record, that a worker can operate safely on your chainsaw, at your site, following your procedures.
When to use it	Before a new worker does the work unsupervised at the site; when they start on a new type of machine, attachment or task; at the re-verification interval your business sets; and after any of the review triggers in Part K.
Who completes it	An assessor your business has chosen as competent to assess (see Part B). The candidate completes the knowledge questions and signs Part J.
What goes with it	The Knowledge Questions (Candidate) for the candidate to answer, the Marking Guide (Assessor) with the model answers, and the VOC Register to track who is verified and when they are due.

Before you start

- Agree the scope (Part C) with the candidate's supervisor: what the candidate will do, on what, and where.
- Do the pre-assessment checks (Part D) before anything else. If one fails, do not start.
- The candidate answers the knowledge questions. Mark them with the Marking Guide and record the result in Part E.
- Observe the practical work (Part F) in the real work area, during normal work where it is safe, with other people kept clear.
- Watch for the safety-critical fail criteria (Part G) the whole time. Any one stops the assessment.
- Record the evidence, the outcome and the re-assessment plan (Parts H and I), give feedback, and sign off with the candidate (Part J).

Licences, training and the VOC

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Part A Candidate details

Name		**Position or role**	
Employer (if a contractor or labour hire)		**Employee or worker ID**	
Training or units of competency held (where required)		**Training completed (course and date)**	
Experience with this chainsaw		**Last VOC or training (date)**	

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Supervisor Field Verification Checklist

Chainsaws: PPE, kickback controls, exclusion zones and the limits of basic work

Site		**Areas checked**	
Date and time		**Shift**	
Verified by		**Equipment checked (IDs)**	

How to verify

- Visit the area while chainsaw work is under way. Look at each control working, not at its paperwork.
- Mark each check Pass, Not met or N/A. Pass means you saw the control in place and working. If you did not see it, it is not a Pass.
- Write what you saw in the evidence column: a location, a photo reference, a record you sampled.
- Talk to the people doing the work, using the questions after the checks. They know where the near misses are.
- Record every Not met in the actions table, with an owner and a due date. Fix what you can on the spot, and record that too.

Escalate now

If a ★ critical control is Not met, act before you leave the area. Stop or restrict the chainsaw work there until it is fixed or another control is in place, and tell **[Escalation contact]** the same shift. A failed critical control is a high potential incident: report it as one.

Checks

★ marks a critical control: one whose failure could let a person be cut, struck by kickback or struck by falling timber. Delete checks that do not apply, and add your own.

No.	Look for (★ critical control)	Pass	Not met	N/A	What you saw (evidence)
PPE					
1	Operators wear cut-resistant leg protection, boots, helmet with face and hearing protection, and gloves ★	☐	☐	☐	
2	PPE is in good condition	☐	☐	☐	
Saw safety features					
3	Chain brakes, throttle lock-outs and chain catchers work on the saws sampled ★	☐	☐	☐	
4	Chains are sharp and tensioned	☐	☐	☐	
Exclusion zone					
5	An exclusion zone is kept around cutting and felling ★	☐	☐	☐	
6	Escape routes are cleared for felling ★	☐	☐	☐	

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END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

This sample shows a few pages, so you can judge the layout and the quality. Editable chainsaw safety documents that work together: a safe work instruction, a pre-start checklist, a VOC and a supervisor's field verification.

What the full product contains

- **Chainsaw safe work instruction: cross-cutting, limbing and basic felling; kickback, PPE and exclusion zones; stop-work points**
  02_SAFE_WORK_INSTRUCTION/Chainsaw Safe Work Instruction.docx and .pdf
- **Chainsaw pre-start checklist: daily checks, defect report and out-of-service process, with printable tags**
  03_PRESTART_CHECKS/Chainsaw Pre-start Checklist.docx and .pdf
- **Supervisor field verification checklist: PPE, saw safety features, exclusion zones and the limits of basic felling**
  05_FIELD_VERIFICATION/Supervisor Field Verification Checklist.docx and .pdf
- **VOC assessment tool, the same as DOC-CHS-VOC**
  04_VOC_ASSESSMENT/Chainsaw VOC Assessment Tool.docx and .pdf
- **VOC knowledge questions (candidate) and marking guide (assessor)**
  04_VOC_ASSESSMENT/Chainsaw VOC Knowledge Questions (Candidate) and Chainsaw VOC Marking Guide (Assessor), .docx and .pdf
- **Excel VOC register**
  04_VOC_ASSESSMENT/Chainsaw VOC Register.xlsx
- **How the documents work together: one page**
  01_START_HERE/How the Documents Work Together.docx and .pdf
- **Setup guide: what to adapt before use**
  01_START_HERE/Setup Guide.docx and .pdf
- **Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information**
  01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

Formats

- Word (.docx), editable, with your logo and business name in the header
- Excel (.xlsx), editable, with dropdowns and formulas
- PDF copies of the Word documents, for printing blank
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