



## FOREST RESOURCES ASSOCIATION INC.

600 JEFFERSON PLAZA, SUITE 350  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

PHONE: 301/838-9385

FAX: 301/838-9481

## SAFETY ALERT

10-S-4

### SAW CHAPS SAVE FORESTER FROM SERIOUS INJURY

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[www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/10-s-4.html](http://www.forestresources.org/members/serpub/10-s-4.html)

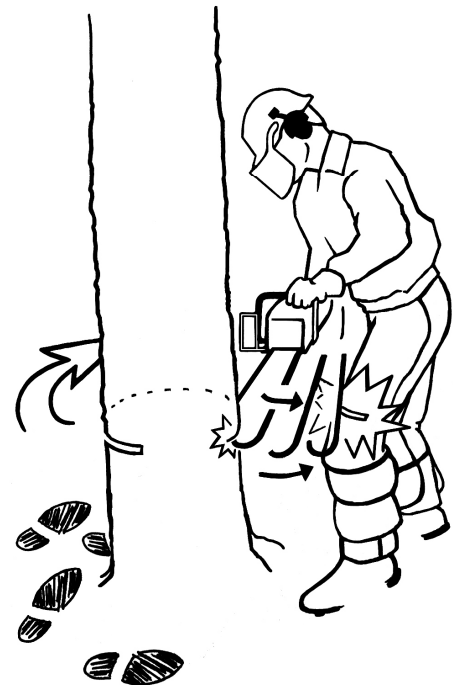
**BACKGROUND:** A forester was using a chain saw to perform timber stand improvement work on his own property on a clear, sunny, extremely cold winter day in the Appalachians.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:** The 34-year-old forester had been fully trained in proper chain saw use, and he had 10 years of chain saw operating experience with no significant accidents or injuries. He was wearing a hard hat with ear and eye protection, chain saw chaps, and leather boots.

**UNSAFE ACTS:** The forester was working alone, behind a closed gate. Although he had a cell phone with him, there was no service, so he could not dial out or receive calls.

He was girdling an undesirable tree using the top of the chain saw bar and only cutting into the tree to a depth of approximately 1 inch. He was girdling the tree fairly high up on the stem, at about thigh level. As he worked his way around the tree, he noticed that the saw “jumped,” but the saw continued to cut, although at a slower pace.

**ACCIDENT:** The forester continued full pressure on the throttle to maintain the cutting speed, but the saw was still laboring. He noticed that a long, white, “stringy” substance was building up around the saw. After a moment of forcing the saw to cut, he realized that the white substance was the protective material that was inside the chaps. He quickly put pressure on the inside part of his left thigh and tried to think about what his plan would be to get help if he was bleeding under the chaps. He feared that he might have severed an artery in his leg and knew that he would not have much time to get help.



**INJURY:** The forester pulled all the material out of the way so that he could examine his leg. He discovered that the saw had cut through all the layers of the chaps and even scratched his pants slightly, but the saw stopped short of cutting his leg.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORRECTION:** When operating a chain saw, be careful not to let the tip of the bar or the top corner (kickback portion) of the saw bar contact other objects. Be sure that the saw’s chain brake is fully functioning. Always wear chaps or other leg protective apparel, and eye, ear, foot, and hand protection when operating a chain saw. The chain saw chaps surely prevented a serious injury in this case.

Never work alone in an isolated area when operating a chain saw. If you must work alone in the woods (for other reasons), let others know of your whereabouts. Consider cell phone coverage or a more sure communication device in case of an emergency (for example, see FRA Technical Release 09-R-18, *Handheld Satellite Communication and Safety Device*). Always think ahead and have a plan of action in case of an unexpected emergency, and complete a certified first-aid and CPR course.

*Reviewed by:*

Rick Meyer

Appalachian/Southwide Region Manager

*Please follow equipment manufacturers’ recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*