

15/09/2021

Woodchipper incident

23 August 2021

A 28-year-old worker suffered serious leg injuries while feeding tree branches into a woodchipper. A rope attached to the branches became caught in the blades and wrapped around the worker's legs pulling him into the woodchipper.



Woodchipper

Safety information

This is the fourth serious incident involving woodchipping machinery in the past 2 years. Two incidents led to workers being killed, while the other two resulted in serious injuries.

Consider 'reasonably practicable' control measures to manage the risks associated with tree work.

When using a woodchipper you must:

Before work commences

- do pre-start checks to make sure everything works properly, including emergency stops and control bar
- operate according to manufacturer's instructions

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing and the findings are not yet confirmed. SafeWork NSW has commenced an investigation in response to the incident to determine its cause and circumstances. No conclusions should be drawn from the information in this publication about the cause of the incident or the culpability of any party.

15/09/2021

Create a safe operating environment

- establish and enforce exclusion zones around the woodchipper
- make sure there are always at least two competent workers who have specific training on the machine being used
- make sure it's never left unattended while operating

Remove hazards

- make sure nothing is entangled in material before it's fed into the woodchipper
- keep unnecessary ropes away from the work area

Operate safely

- ensure the work area is kept clear for workers to stand and identify any hazards
- feed branches off the centre line - the operator feeding the branches into the woodchipper should do so from the side
- use a 'push-stick' at least 1.5 metres long to feed shorter material into the machine
- stop the feed mechanism before reaching into the chute

More information

- [Amenity Tree Industry – SafeWork NSW](#) (Code of Practice)
- [Guidance material on tree work - SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Tree work self-assessment checklist - SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Tree work industry action plan - SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Tree work action plan: outcomes – SafeWork NSW](#)
- [Guide to managing risks of tree trimming and removal – SafeWork Australia](#)