

Who Needs a User's Manual?

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I just had bought a new chainsaw and was anxious to use it. As soon as I got the saw out of the box, I threw the “useless” instruction manual aside and went to work. I hadn’t gone very far when my visiting mother pointed out a dead branch. “You should take that out next.”

I promptly donned my PPE (goggles and leather gloves), placed a 6-foot ladder at the base of the doomed dead branch, and climbed up, with my trusty chainsaw in hand. Having watched lots of B-rated movies with scenes from “Chainsaw Massacre,” and being schooled by my neighbor for at least 60 seconds on how to use the saw, I felt assured I knew what I was doing. I immediately proved it when I made an undercut just like my neighbor had showed me.

By now, I had accumulated more than five minutes of experience with my new saw. It cut through the dead branch like a hot knife cutting through butter. Unfortunately, I hadn’t looked close enough at the branch before I started cutting to realize just how big it really was. Damned by the laws of physics and momentum, I only could watch the branch sail toward my leg as it fell.

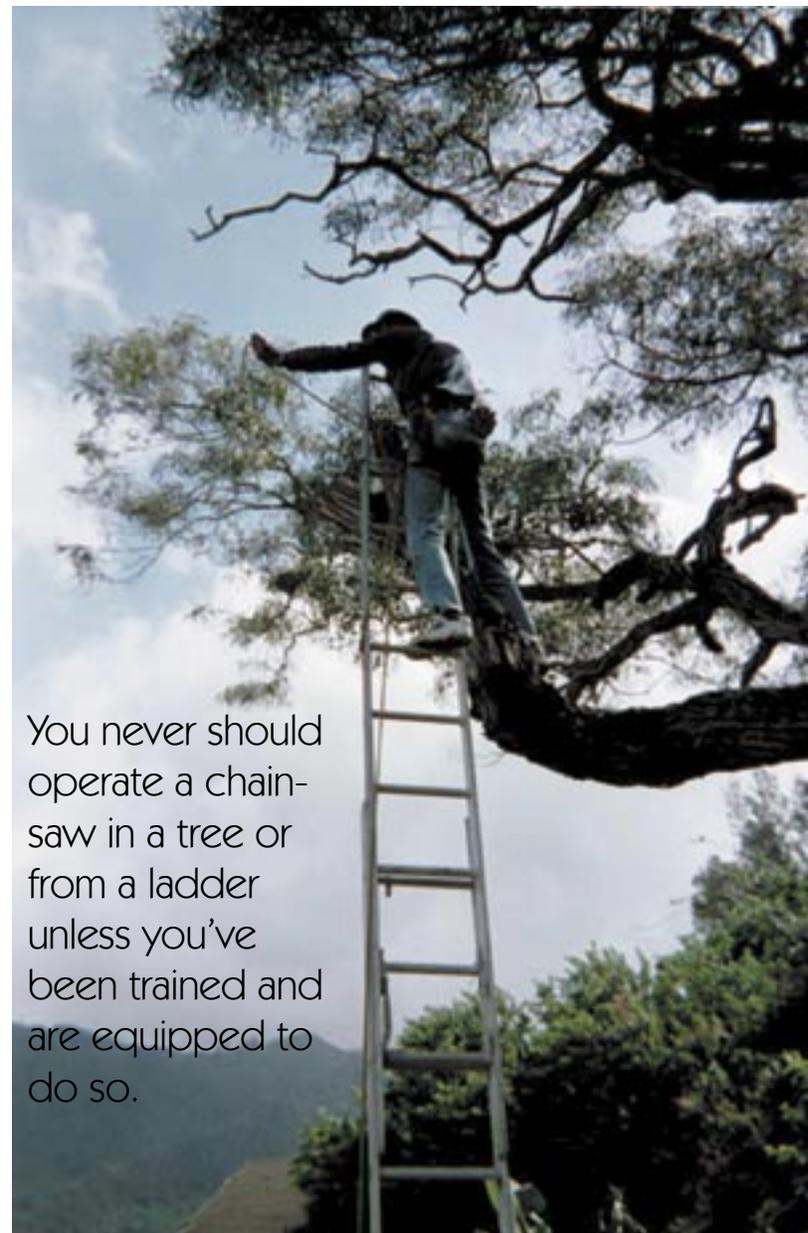
The next thing I knew, my trusty saw no longer was in my skilled hands. I had what I believed to be a minor cut in my thigh. After a few seconds of denial, I looked at the “minor” flesh wound and yelled down to my father. “Dad, I’m all right, but you need to call an ambulance.”

He just had inquired why I needed an ambulance when my neighbor, who claimed she was an EMT, stopped by and said she could take me to a hospital. I climbed down the ladder with my leg bleeding and stumbled into her SUV. After a pleasant trip to the hospital, I entered the emergency room with a 4-inch gash in my leg. I had severed an over-abundance of muscle, exposing my hitherto unseen femur.

Much to my enjoyment, every curious member of the hospital staff poked and prodded my leg wound. They informed me I was lucky I hadn’t

violated my knee joint and hadn’t cut any major tendons or veins. Thus, I would suffer no long-term loss of function in my dominant leg.

It took 14 stitches to close the wound in my leg, but I was up flying only two weeks later. In hindsight, I realize my goggles and gloves weren’t adequate protection. I should have read the user’s manual or simply left the larger limbs to professional tree cutters. ❌



You never should operate a chainsaw in a tree or from a ladder unless you’ve been trained and are equipped to do so.