



# LESSONS LEARNED

Northern Region Safety & Occupational Health

August 2011

## Fire Sawyer Cut by Chain

### **SUMMARY OF INCIDENT:**

A crew was doing hot mop up on a section of fire line. One of the Sawyers had shut down the chainsaw he was operating and was proceeding to the next objective to fall a small snag. The firefighter had put the saw on his shoulder to hike over to the next saw operation approximately 300 feet away. **“He really didn't slip and fall that much in fact he really didn't lose his balance that bad.”** As the firefighter was proceeding to his next cut he lost his balance slightly as he was hiking, bringing the chain on chainsaw in contact with his neck. **“At first we did not think there was any injurious after his initial ouch he proceeded over to the snag.”** However, the Sawyer had a small laceration on his neck and needed a few stitches. When he met up with his swamper and squad boss they decided to get the firefighter treatment and out of dirty atmosphere. The firefighter did have a shoulder pad on which was part of his line gear, but the chain was not covered on chainsaw and he did not have a collar of shirt up. The cover for the bar was in the crew buggy.



### **WHAT WAS DONE WELL:**

Seeing that the injury may take more than first aid the firefighter was taking to base camp for treatment. As well as, due to the environment, the decision to remove the firefighter for cleanup helped prevent infection.

### **CONTRIBUTING FACTOR:**

Many of the crew and leadership knew that you should always cover the chainsaw chain not just as a recommendation, but when ever carrying on your shoulder. Not recognizing earlier near misses by the crew and the lack of anyone saying anything can lead to an interpretation that is not right. Also the shoulder pad is protection of the shoulder and the shirt it will not protect any other part of the body as perceived by some employees.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Carrying the chainsaw on your shoulder is an acceptable and good safe practice when working on wildland fires and general forest projects. However when carrying on the shoulder, extra care must be taken due to the sharpness of the chain and dogs to cover the bar and chain. It is also acceptable to carry the chainsaws at your side with the chain brake on. You should always have a shoulder with pad when carrying the chainsaw on the shoulder. This



is protection for the Sawyer's shoulder and protects the shirt from being ripped or damaged. Proper footing and tool control must always be on your mind; even small slips can lead to injuries. Updating the National or Regional chainsaw standards to have this is not recommended, but shell. Crew is reviewing SOP's for chainsaw operations.

Do not use your chainsaw chaps to cover chain bars, as they are not made for this. Purchase covers specifically made to cover chains and dogs. Like hand tools, chainsaws should be carried on the downhill side shoulder when on slopes.