

Introduction

This leaflet covers the safe working practices to be used when removing the branches of conifers and small hardwoods. For guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE), the machine, preparing to work, maintenance, fuelling and starting procedures see AFAG leaflet 301 *Using petrol-driven chainsaws*. For guidance on job organisation see AFAG leaflet 302 *Basic chainsaw felling and manual takedown*.

You can use this leaflet, along with the chainsaw manufacturer's handbook, as part of the risk assessment process to help identify the controls to put in place when chainsaw snedding.

You must also assess the effect of the site and the weather as well as following this guidance.

All operators must have had appropriate training in how to operate the machine and how to carry out the tasks required (see HSE leaflet INDG317 *Chainsaws at work*).

For specific advice on de-limbing large trees, see AFAG leaflet 307 *Chainsaw felling of large trees*.

Preparing to sned

- 1 A safe method of operation must be agreed to ensure that a safe working distance can be maintained between workers. On sites where felling is taking place, this distance should be at least two tree lengths. This distance should also be used in other situations unless the risks arising from closer working have been assessed and judged to be acceptably low.
- 2 Look out for dead wood, and insecure and broken branches in the crowns of adjacent trees, which may have become dislodged during felling.
- 3 Check for any obstructions, eg standing trees, boulders, unusual branch formations or windblown trees in the path of progress along the tree (see also paragraph 14).
- 4 Ensure the tree is in a stable condition before any snedding starts.

Snedding

- 5 Always sned with the tree on your right-hand side (see Figure 1).
- 6 On slopes, where there is a risk of the tree rolling, work from the upper side of the stem.
- 7 Always adopt a secure and balanced stance.
- 8 Do not use the chainsaw above shoulder height.
- 9 Use an organised sequence of snedding cuts and do not over-reach.

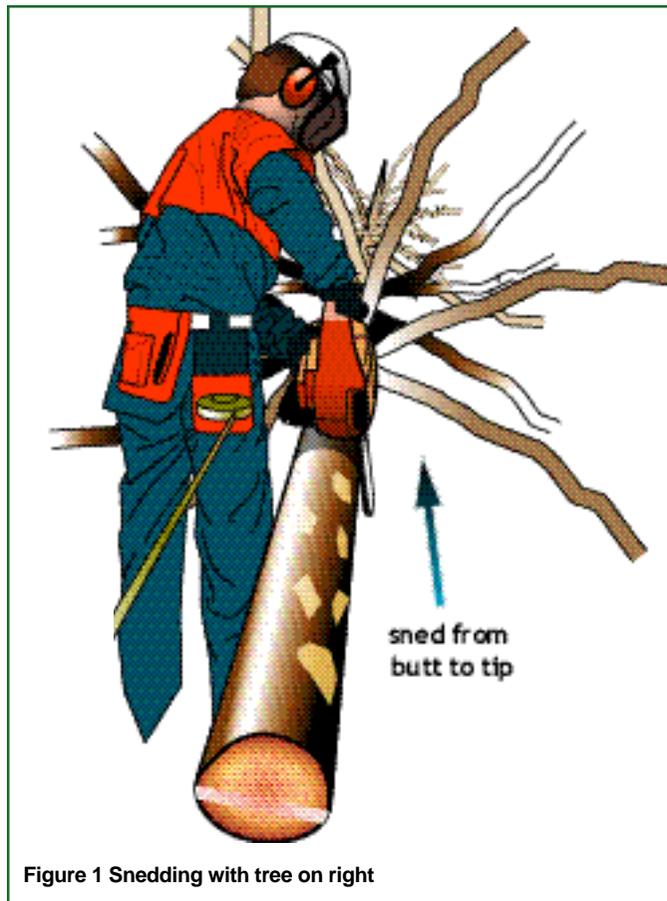


Figure 1 Snedding with tree on right

- 10 Keep the saw close to the body and support the weight of the saw on the tree or right thigh.
- 11 Do not step forward when snedding the near side of the stem.
- 12 Keep the right foot well away from the intended path of the chain when cutting branches on the far side of the stem.
- 13 Be aware of branches and undergrowth under tension and watch out for springback.
- 14 Do not cut branches with the kickback zone on the tip of the bar and do not allow the tip of the bar to catch uncut branches, supporting logs, butt ends or other obstructions. This can cause kickback.
- 15 Maintain a firm grip on both handles of the chainsaw until the chain stops.
- 16 Ensure the saw is in a safe position before moving branches.

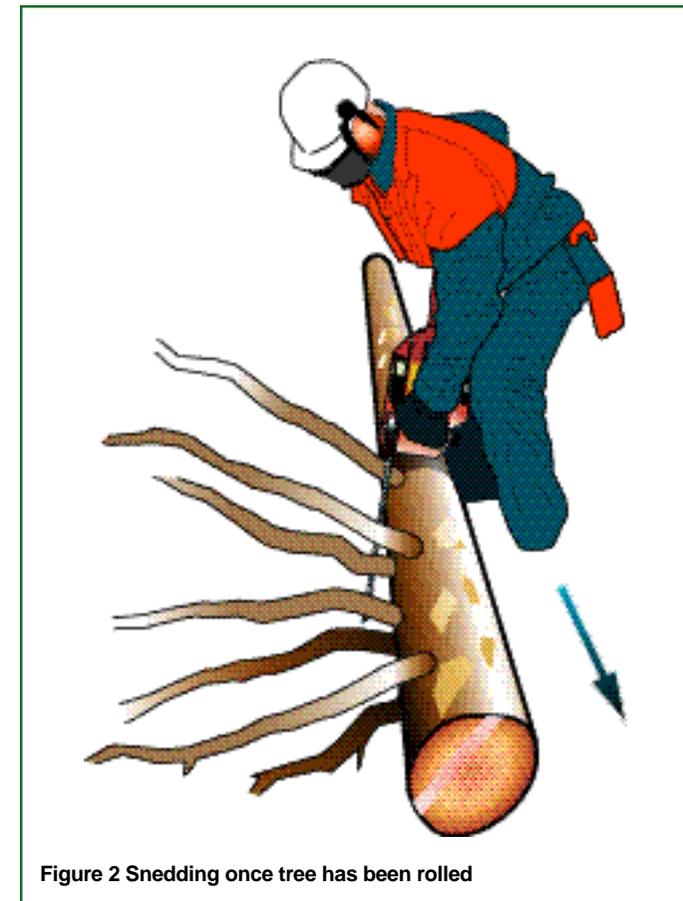


Figure 2 Snedding once tree has been rolled

- 17 Apply the chain brake before reaching across the guide bar.
- 18 Where the stem is supported off the ground, under-sweep the remaining branches using the top of the bar, with the saw braced against the body. Do not over-reach.
- 19 When the tree has been turned for access to the remaining branches, use the stem for protection while cutting (see Figure 2).

Removal of tree top

- 20 Use only approved cross-cutting techniques (see AFAG leaflet 304 *Chainsaw cross-cutting and manual stacking*).
- 21 Do not over-reach when cutting off or cutting up the top of the tree.
- 22 Do not cut off the top of the tree with a sweep from the far side using the top of the guide bar.