



# Near Miss!



Date: October 20, 2020

Activity: Chain Saw Safety

## What Happened:

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' subcontractor working at a debris removal site in Calhoun County, Georgia, recently learned a valuable lesson about the importance of wearing the proper safety gear.

The contractor, who will be referred to as "Dave" for the sake of anonymity, was working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Corps to help remove debris from the area following Hurricane Michael.



Dave, who has 20-plus years' experience doing this type of work, was using a chainsaw to cut a large tree trunk into smaller pieces when a near-miss accident happened.

## Why it Happened:

"I was standing on a 3 foot diameter tree doing a left cross cut," said Dave. "When passing through, my foot slipped, and the chainsaw came straight into my left thigh at full-bore. I have done more sawing than most lumberjacks, but in my 20-plus years of cutting trees...I've never had such a close call."

Luckily, Dave followed the persistent recommendations of Corps Quality Assurance Representatives and purchased and wore chainsaw chaps the same day the accident happened.

"A lot of people don't realize how dangerous a chainsaw is," said Joseph Drawdy, a safety specialist with the Corps' Savannah District. "Chainsaws have a tendency to kickback. We require that all contractors wear safety shoes, face shields, and chaps per the Corps Safety Manual."

Drawdy said that chainsaw chaps are made of cut resistant material that prevent a moving chain from cutting through the material. They provide an extra layer of protection that will stop the chain from moving or force the chainsaw to cut the chaps rather than the operator's leg.

"With USACE jobs, it's mandatory [to wear safety gear], but when I go back to these other places nobody has this gear on," said Dave.

While Dave says that he's never worn chainsaw chaps in all of his years of working, he's thankful that he wore them the day the accident happened, because not only did they protect his leg from a potentially severe injury, but they may have also saved his life.

"I could have bled out and died if it wasn't for my chainsaw chaps," he said. "Most definitely I would have never walked the same again. To think that something won't happen...I consider myself an expert and I made a mistake."

**I may be getting old, but I can still spot safety violations. This man has no hard hat, no safety glasses, no hearing protection and no gloves!**



