

Toolbox Talk

Brushcutters

Brushcutters, trimmers and clearing saws are becoming increasingly common on canal sites. This tool box talk is intended to remind volunteers of the safe use of such machinery. Brushcutters, trimmers & clearing saws are effectively the same thing - the cutting attachment is what makes the difference (see 'types of attachment'). Whichever attachment you are using, you must ensure it is compatible with the machine, failure to do so can be very dangerous.

These machines can appear simple to operate, but complacency can prove to be very dangerous. Make sure you are fully aware of all the operating instructions and safety considerations before you start the machine.

Safety Considerations

There are a number of general safety considerations to followed when using these machines:

- A fuelling point should be selected at a safe distance away from where the machines are to started and operated. Machines must be switched off and left to cool before refuelling.
- Machines must not be used on steep (>45 degrees) or slippery slopes.
- All other persons should remain at least 50 feet *15 metres- from the operator. A banksman is advisable when working alongside large groups of volunteers or in public places.
- Regular rest breaks should to taken to avoid the effects of vibration and fatigue.
- Be aware of hidden dangers, especially when working at the canal side. It is advisable to do a pre-work assessment of the site.

Key Points:

- All operators should have been trained in the safe operation of a brushcutter.
- All operators should be able to carry out necessary routine maintenance before use.
- Minimum requirement for safety equipment is goggles and ear defenders, WRG also recommend full face protection.



Types of Attachments

The Strimmer or cord head:

For grass, nettles & soft vegetation.



The brushcutter or brush knife attachment:

For brambles, reeds and saplings up to an inch thick.



The clearing saw or circular saw blade:

Can cut up to 8inch trees, but needs specific training such as a LANTRA or NPTC certificate.



Pre Use Safety Check:

- ✓ Clean the outside of the machine
- ✓ Make sure the harness is not damaged.
- ✓ Make sure the throttle trigger lock and the throttle function correctly from a safety point
- ✓ Check that the stop switch functions.
- ✓ Clean the air filter. Replace if necessary.
- ✓ Check that the cutting head does not rotate
- ✓ Check that the guard is undamaged and not cracked. Replace the guard if it has been exposed to impact or is cracked.
- ✓ Check that all nuts and screws are tightened.
- ✓ Check that the trigger head is undamaged and not cracked. Replace the trigger head if necessary