

## Use of Polesaws

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this Guideline under Section 38(1) of the *Emergency Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

### Purpose

This Guideline is to inform members of the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), both volunteer and staff, of the Service expectations on the use of Polesaws.

### Scope

This Guideline is applicable to all personnel from the ACT Rural Fire Service, including staff and volunteer members.

### Background

The ACTRFS has procured a range of Pole saws to enhance our capability to address storm damage.

Feedback from crews assisting with SES storm damage jobs indicated that availability of a pole saw would assist in closing a significant number of jobs where suspended tree branches cannot be safely access from the ground with traditional chain saws.

The polesaws are professional models from Stihl and Husqvarna.

### Application

The following section of this Guideline outlines the maintenance, startup, operation, PPE and shutdown processes that should be followed when using pole saws at incidents.

### Maintenance

Like any chainsaw, ongoing effectiveness requires regular maintenance. Sharpen the chain, remove the bar and blow out chips, check fuel and oil.

## *Startup*

Perform pre-start checks:

- Check for any damage to the unit
- Ensure fuel and bar oil caps seal correctly, check levels
- Check the bar is secure
- Check chain tension
- Select a suitable site for fuelling and starting the machine as per the recommendations in the operator's manual.

Position the saw on the ground, start it and allow it to warm up.

## *Operation*

A Pole saw must only be used where an ACTRFS member holds a current chainsaw qualification and has been inducted into these guidelines and the tool.

A risk assessment is essential before use. Consider utilities, exclusion zones, public access and noise.

There are 2 major causes of injury from polesaw use:

1. Falling branches
2. Electrical wires

Plan your escape route and make sure it is clear.

Position yourself so you are not looking into the sun.

## *PPE*

Minimum requirements:

- Helmet
- Eye protection
- Hearing protection
- Chaps
- Safety boots
- HiVis clothing

## *Operator tips*

A common issue is the saw getting trapped due to incorrect assessment of compression and failing to address it first. (It can be difficult to undercut branches, but it is more difficult to safely retrieve a trapped saw).

Never stand directly underneath the branch being cut. Generally position the saw at less than 60 degrees to horizontal.

Do not hold the saw above chest height to get extra reach as this greatly reduces your control of the tool.

Start small and work your way back towards the trunk where possible. (Reduce the weight of the branch)

Pole saws are primarily designed to remove lateral branches (not upright stems). It is almost impossible to make a correct pruning cut on upright growth and these normally result in a spear cut which will not be able to compartmentalise correctly.

Kickback is surprisingly common if you try to position the saw with the chain moving.

Allow the weight of the saw to make the cut, do not add pressure.

Pole saws enhance your vertical reach. They are not designed to cut branches on the ground.

### *Shut down*

Ensure chain has stopped moving before bringing the saw head down to ground level.

Control the descent of the saw carefully.

Ensure the chain guard is fitted prior to moving the saw.

Secure the saw appropriately in/on your vehicle.

## Responsibilities


Members (including volunteer and staff members)	Must comply with instructions on use of ACT RFS property and equipment. Regularly check serviceability of PPE before use. May not use ACT RFS resources for non-official use, unless approved by the RFS CO or delegate.
Equipment Officer	Report all faulty, lost or damaged equipment to ACT RFS HQ.
Brigade Executives	Ensure only authorised use is made of all ACT RFS resources, including property, fire-fighting and station equipment, clothing, PPE, PPC and vehicles. Ensure appropriate PPC is used for all active incidents, training and fire suppression activities.
ACT RFS Director, Operations	Ensure appropriate claims are made for damaged, lost or faulty equipment and replacements organised.
ACT RFS Chief Officer (CO) ACT RFS Duty Officer (DO)	Approve non-official use of RFS resources where appropriate.

	Approve use of RFS resources outside the ACT where appropriate.
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## Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Steve Huntley	0.1	1/10/2022	Initial draft
Steve Quinlan	0.1	14/6/24	Administrative Review

## Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACT RFS		

## Document Owner

Position	Section
RFS Director	Operations

Next review due: 1/2/27

## Related documents

Document name
1.2.1 Using PPE and PPC Standard Operating Procedure

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.