

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-22

ISSUE: VENTILATION SAWS

Ventilation is an important component of conducting safe and effective fire fighting in structures. Coordinating ventilation and fire attack streams can result in less danger to firefighters and occupants and provide quicker fire control.

Fire departments use various types and makes of power saws to open roofs for ventilation. The safe use of these saws requires knowledge and training on the operation of this equipment.

Ventilation saws are commonly divided into two types:

- Rotary or Circular saws which use a variety of circular blades to cut wood, steel and concrete.
- Chain Saws – which are now available with different chains, blades and special attachments designed specifically for fire ventilation work.

Saws include models with improved safety and operating features for fire department use that should be considered when buying new saws.

SOP's/OG's on ventilation saws should include the following:

- Proper maintenance and servicing of saws as per the manufacturers operating manual including fueling, oil mixes, starting, stopping, checking chain brake, chain adjustment and cleaning.
- Start and run the saw briefly on the ground and then shut off, before it is sent aloft.
- Most new ventilation chain saws have an adjustable depth gauge that increases safety and can be set to minimize cutting of rafters.
- Follow safety procedures for working on roofs
- Wear full protective equipment including eye protection if not wearing SCBA.
- Have a guide to watch where the operator is going and clear the path of obstructions.
- Keep all other firefighters clear of the cutting operation

- Departments should ensure that firefighters are trained how to safely operate the saws used by their department and maintain records of the training.
- Where a department is using chain saws for cutting trees and work associated with forest fire fighting additional training qualifications for use of chain saws in logging operations may be required.

For additional information refer to:

- IFSTA Manuals
- Fire Service Ventilation
- Forcible Entry
- Essentials

Guidance Note #6 -14 Safe Roof Operations