



West Berkshire
Countryside Society

WBCS – Use of brush cutters

Recommendations and safe practice notes.

Please read in conjunction with WBCS Risk Assessment and Site Safety Sheets

Based on LANTRA booklet – 04/05/07

WBCS original October 2013 Updated August 2015 and Nov 2018

<h3>1. Preparing for brush cutter operations</h3>	<h3>3. Operating the brush cutter - as the operator you should ></h3>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ensure that a risk assessment has been carried out and the significant findings recorded. <i>(see WBCS SPRA for each task)</i> ❑ All workers on site to be made aware of and comply with the controls identified. ❑ Operators should not normally work alone, and the use of look outs (spotters) is recommended. ❑ Agree a method of communication between the operator and the look out before starting work. This to be highlighted in the start of work briefing. ❑ In case of emergency, be able to provide the emergency services with adequate information about your location <i>(see WBCS task SPRA)</i> ❑ Erect warning signs and barriers as necessary - especially if public involved. ❑ First Aid kit with eye wash to be available on site. ❑ First aider on site, no first aider = no work ❑ Fire blanket to be available near fueling point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Agree the area that is to be cut ❑ Wear suitable PPE –Helmet with mesh face shield, eye and ear protection, gloves, leg protection and boots ❑ Agree a method of communication between the operator and the look out before starting work ❑ Check the Site ground conditions and be aware of the unexpected ❑ Avoid cutting, or contact with, materials that may damage cutting head – e.g. metal or masonry – glass, syringes, excrement etc. ❑ Check and avoid rare or toxic plant species. ❑ Do not use the cutter if the blade rotates on “tick-over” or when there is excessive vibration from the cutting head. ❑ Ensure a safe working distance (at least 15 m radius / 50ft) between workers. ❑ Use a lookout if working near public access areas and use an agreed warning routine. ❑ When using metal blades – be aware of “kickback” from hard objects – rocks, tree stumps etc. ❑ Take 10minute break at each tank fill-up and a 30-minute break after 3 tank refills
<h3>2. Machine checks by operator before and during use</h3>	<h3>4. Additional routine maintenance by machine “keeper”</h3>
<p>General visual inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ All safety features are present and adjusted. ❑ All controls are working correctly ❑ There are no loose or damaged parts ❑ Fuel tank filled with correct fuel mixture. ❑ Fuelling site to be well clear (4 metres) of other sources of ignition e.g. fire sites and work sites. ❑ Machine should be started well clear of refuelling point. ❑ Report any problems or damage to designated machine “keeper”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Clean - air filter, fuel tank filter, cooling fins. ❑ Check/adjust spark plug & carburettor. ❑ Sharpen blade and check gearbox grease <p>See maintenance summary overleaf. ></p>

Machine maintenance summary – includes operator checks and keeper checks

Brush cutters safety checks and servicing	Operator		Keeper	
	On each use	After refuelling	After each use	Annual check
All safety features are present and properly adjusted. Blade guard, engine covers	x	x	x	x
All controls are working correctly - On/off switch, throttle, throttle lock, choke, recoil starter.	x	x	x	x
Check there are no loose or damaged parts	x	x	x	x
Check condition of blade and central bolt before use Note – the bolt has a left-hand thread	x		x	x
Check/clean cooling fins and air filter if working in dusty conditions		x	x	x
Check fuel lines – no leaks	x	x	x	x
Check for “no turn” on tick over speed	x		x	x
Check/adjust spark plug				x
Check/adjust carburettor				x
Check and clean fuel tank filter				x
Check / top up gearbox grease			x	x
Sharpen blade			x	x
Next annual service due (Month and year)				
Comments / work needed				

Other information

- Legislation involved -
HASAW 1974,
PUWER 1998,
Control of Noise at Work & Control of Vibration at work Regs both 2005
- HSE/AFAG leaflets
AFAG 802 Emergency planning
AFAG 203 Clearing saw. – a separate qualification is recommended for this tool.
All at :- www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/forindex.htm and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm>