

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

Craft-Maintenance Division State of California Unit 12
Locals 3, 39 & 501, AFL-CIO

IUOE Unit 12 Representatives Participate in CalOSHA Advisory Committee Meeting on Passive Safety Devices for Brush and Wood Chippers – January 30, 2019

Yesterday, the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board Advisory Committee held a meeting at the Local 39 office in Sacramento to discuss a petition that has been filed with the Board to amend Title 8, Article 12 of the General Safety Orders to require tree and brush chippers to have a passive presence sensing device that would interrupt power to the infeed rollers and stop motion before injuring an operator. IUOE Unit 12 is a member on the committee.

The Petitioner stated that the current standards governing wood chippers are insufficient to protect employees. The Petitioner asserted that a device that he has developed and patented would afford the protections required under the Federal safety standard. The Petitioner's device is made up of an electronic magnetic detection system utilizing rare earth magnets sewn into wearable accessories worn by the employees in conjunction with two detection plates mounted on the side walls of the hopper. Once the detection plates (also referred to as antennae) detect the magnetic field, as the accessories pass by the side plates, the infeed rollers automatically shut down. The Petitioner's device will only detect an employee wearing the supplied accessories.

On the committee there were representatives from Labor, the brush and tree chipper manufacturers, the tree care industry association, CalOSHA, and the petitioner. Unfortunately, the Caltrans safety representative was a no-show.

Since 1982 there have been 22 deaths and 2,042 accidents associated with improper use of wood chippers in California.

As you can expect, the industry and manufacturer representatives were a bit hesitant to support Petitioner's amendment.

Just as a side note, Petitioner offered to outfit Caltrans's recent purchase of 42 new wood chippers with this Passive Safety Device at no charge. They rejected his offer and went with the Feed Stop Bars instead. There will be several more meetings of the Advisory Committee before this issue is resolved.

UNION STRONG!

Steve Crouch
Director of Public Employees