

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Safety & Training Section ~ Volunteer Resources Section

VOLUNTEER POWER EQUIPMENT OPERATOR PROGRAM

Volunteer power equipment operators help to clear Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) land of exotic brush. Removal is necessary to facilitate restoration and management of the District's native plant communities and is performed only when necessary to prevent the spread of aggressive species. Use of power equipment on District property is prohibited unless in accordance with the District's ecological management practices and the FPDCC Land Management Guidelines. Volunteer power equipment operators must have successfully completed the District's Volunteer Power Equipment Operator (VPEO) training and be in full compliance with all aspects of the VPEO Program.

Skills & Abilities

The Volunteer Power Equipment Operator should have the:

1. physical ability to carry, start and operate gasoline powered chainsaws and/or brush cutters.
2. ability to work outdoors 2 – 3 hours at a time in a variety of weather conditions.
3. ability to explain to the public and new volunteers reasons for ecological management.
4. willingness to work in close contact with a variety of plants and animals.
5. ability to work in a team environment with other volunteers and District employees.
6. ability to convey safe operating procedures and regulations to other volunteers and to the public.
7. willingness to be a positive representative of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and to follow all directions, regulations, and guidelines.

Requirements

The Volunteer Power Equipment Operator:

1. must be 21 years of age, have successfully completed the District's Volunteer Power Equipment Operator training, and have read and signed the VPEO Waiver/Application.
2. must comply with all District safety regulations.
3. must comply with all District environmental protection regulations.
4. must wear the minimum required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at all times during chainsaw or brush cutter operation. Minimum PPE includes: complete helmet with face-shield and ear protection, safety chaps, eye protection, gloves, work boots and other appropriate clothing.
5. must wear a District issued safety vest and have VPEO identification on his/her person.
6. must work with assistance; never alone.
7. must have a cell phone with him/her at all times during power equipment operation.
8. must have appropriate first aid equipment on hand.
9. must get advance approval from the Volunteer Resources Section of where and when he/she will be working.
10. must operate within the scope and duties associated with being a Volunteer Power Equipment Operator.
11. must not use alcohol before or during power equipment operation.
12. must not attempt, nor allow him or herself to be directed to attempt, actions as a VPEO that he/she feels are beyond his/her abilities.

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Responsibilities

1. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County shall provide the following PPE: complete helmet with face-shield & ear protection, safety chaps, and eye protection.
2. The VPEO shall provide all other PPE: gloves, work boots, and appropriate clothing.
3. The District shall provide chainsaws and brush cutters.
4. Should a VPEO wish to use personal PPE and/or power equipment, such PPE and or equipment must be inspected and approved by the District.
5. The District shall provide cutters, chain, fuel, oil, and any other appropriate replaceable part even if personally owned equipment is approved and used.
6. The VPEO will ensure that all equipment is properly and promptly maintained by the appropriate party.
7. Power equipment should not be used when hand tools would be more appropriate such as in the case of cutting vines or small diameter brush.

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Extrême care should be taken when operating a chainsaw or brush cutter. Be aware of those who may be working or standing around you. Avoid wearing loose clothing and jewelry. Look up from your work frequently to re-ascertain the location of others. Keep all cutting edges sharp, inspect equipment often for wear, and service regularly.

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Volunteers and members of the public often come to the Forest Preserves to seek and enjoy tranquility. Even volunteers glad that chainsaws are employed in the restoration and maintenance of the ecological health of the Forest Preserves, enjoy the ethic of hard work in the quiet of nature. Nothing can be more discouraging to a volunteer than to have the noisy accomplishment of power tools seem to overwhelm his or her quiet efforts. Please respect these volunteers and members of the public.