
Storage



Whether crosscut saws are stored at a backcountry guard station or in the district warehouse, they need to be stored properly.

Long-Term Storage

Store crosscut saws straight. Remove the handles and store the saws in a dry location.

Never store a saw flat on a metal surface. Although the saw can be laid horizontally if it is supported along its entire length, items may be dropped on a saw, damaging it. It is best to hang a saw from a nail through a handle hole.

Store the saw with a coating of heavy oil or grease diluted with solvent. The coating needs to be thick enough that it will not evaporate. Plant-based lubricants like canola oil are not appropriate coatings for long-term storage. These oils dry out and leave a hard residue on the saw that is difficult to remove.

Near saltwater environments, wash your saws in clean water to remove any salt residue before applying the heavy oil coating. Wear gloves when applying the oil.

Never lean a saw against a wall where the saw could develop a bend. Never leave a saw bent around a fire pack.

Do not store a saw in a sheath or with a guard on the blade. Rubber-lined firehose is particularly bad because it holds moisture next to the saw's teeth. If the teeth become pitted, the saw is useless because damaged teeth will not withstand the hammering needed during sharpening.

Do not hang a saw where people or animals could be injured by the unsheathed teeth. Do not store saws on top of one another. When the unsheathed saws rub against each other, the saws can be damaged.

I prefer to store my saws unsheathed on 16d finishing nails driven into the top plate of a wall in an isolated area of a building, where the saws do not present a hazard. Use 3-inch square pieces of corrugated cardboard as spacers between saws hanging on the same nail.

Storage in the Field

Moisture forms rust, and rust ruins saws, so take every effort to keep the saw dry. Saw can't always be kept dry in the field, so I place wet saws where they will dry quickly. Try hanging the saw under a heavily limbed tree where the branches will help protect it, or on the side of the tree that exposes the saw to the sun or wind. Remove the saw's sheath before drying, and tie the saw so it will not blow around in the wind.

Once the saw is dry, wipe it clean and rub it with an oily rag. Choose a storage location out of sight and away from game trails.

Remove the saw handles and sheath. Bears tend to gnaw on wooden handles. Rodents chew on leather straps and anything that has salt on it. Leave nothing but the metal parts in the field. If the saw is only being left overnight, it can be stored under a log with the teeth pointed in. If you are storing a saw longer than for just one night, hang it.

Saw Sheaths

Sheaths protect the saw and prevent it from causing damage or inflicting injury. Saw should be sheathed as much as possible unless they are being used or are in storage. Wear gloves whenever you remove or replace a saw sheath.

Saw sheaths can be rigid or flexible. Rigid sheaths are easier for hikers to carry for long distances because the saw blade doesn't flop up and down on the hiker's shoulder. One sawyer told me that his saw broke while he carried it over his shoulder. I assume the constant flexing led to metal fatigue.

Rigid sheaths can cover just the saw's teeth or the entire blade. Flexible sheaths provide protection while allowing saws to be bent around backpacks or over pack animals. Flexible sheaths also are lightweight and easier to carry when they are not on the saw.

A length of old firehose that has been split makes one of the best crosscut saw sheaths. Wipe the hose's rubber inner lining with an oily rag to repel water and reduce the possibility that moisture in the sheath will cause the saw to rust. Sheaths made of leather and nylon are available commercially. The Missoula Technology and Development

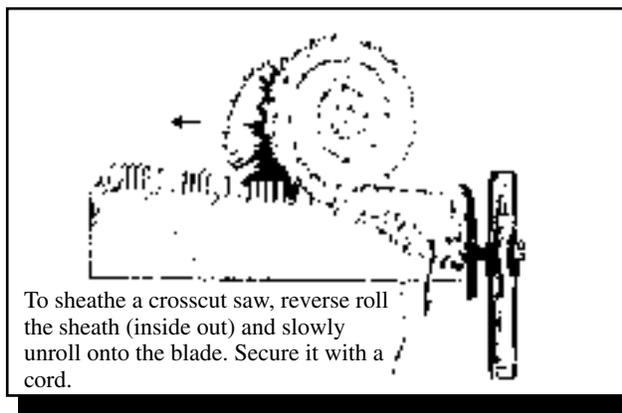
Center (MTDC) also has come up with a design for a saw sheath (figure 27, see *Crosscut Saw Guards* by George Jackson, 1997).



Figure 27—MTDC developed this saw sheath. The guard is made from 1½-inch discarded firehose using nylon straps and hook-and-loop fasteners.

Wear gloves to install the hose sheath. Begin by rolling the sheath inside out (rubber side out). Turn the saw so its teeth face up; unroll the hose down the saw, covering the teeth (figure 28). Attach the sheath to the saw using parachute cord or Velcro closures.

Some sawyers sandwich the saw between two rectangular pieces of plywood. The saw's handle holes are placed over pins at each end of one of the pieces of plywood, securing the saw.



To sheath a crosscut saw, reverse roll the sheath (inside out) and slowly unroll onto the blade. Secure it with a cord.

Figure 28—The proper way to unroll rubber-lined firehose onto a saw. Wear gloves to protect your hands.—Copyright 1996. Reprinted with permission of the publisher of Robert C. Birkby's *Lightly on the Land*, published by the Student Conservation Association and The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA