

TREE TRIMMING SAFETY



A Publication of the Oklahoma Department of Labor

Take Control of Workplace Safety

Employers are ultimately responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. Employees must follow the rules and utilize proper personal protective equipment, and follow safe work practices. The most common types of serious tree-trimming accidents are:

Electrocution—You can be seriously injured or killed if you come into contact with an electrical line. Electrocution, by definition, is a fatal dose of electrical current. Electrical shock and electrical burns are also serious hazards that can result in injury or death.

Falling From Trees—Falling from heights is one of the leading causes of worker fatalities in the United States.

Being Struck by Trees or Limbs—trees can be unpredictable when they are cut, and can ricochet towards the tree trimmer, or rotate as they fall and strike a worker.

Help yourself

Safe work habits are important. Here are three important actions every worker can take to be safe on the job:

1. Learn all you can. Read and follow directions that come with all climbing and trimming equipment. Pay attention to the safety instructions and look for warning labels. If you have questions, stop and ask your supervisor before you continue. Do not alter equipment, remove guards, or deface the warning labels. Do not operate equipment that is not functioning properly.
2. Concentrate on working safely. Avoid shortcuts. For your safety and the safety around you, don't take unnecessary risks. No deadline is so pressing that you can't take the time to do your work safely.
3. Additional Precautions: Do not operate machinery or climb trees if you are tired or have taken drugs or alcohol. Working at heights requires you to be at your physical and mental best. If you are on medication, discuss with your doctor or pharmacist to determine if you are capable of climbing and operating machinery safely.
4. Use the correct personal protective equipment. Hard hats, ANSI-approved safety glasses with face shield, hearing protection, sturdy non-slip boots, climbing equipment and leg protection are basic safety requirements for tree trimming jobs.



Photo credits: ODOL

Employers are required to provide a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. The Oklahoma Department of Labor's OSHA Consultation provides free on-site safety and health consultations for private employers who wish to improve worker safety and health.

Public Sector Employers fall under the jurisdiction of the Public Employees Occupational Safety & Health Division (PEOSH). Limited service consultations are also available for public employers.

For more information, visit our website at www.labor.ok.gov or call (405)-521-6140 or 1-888-269-5353



Photo courtesy of OSHA

Aerial Lifts

Aerial lifts are a useful tool for tree trimmers, but safety precautions must be taken.

- ◇ Do not exceed the boom and basket load limits specified by the manufacturer.
- ◇ Ensure that brakes are set and outriggers are used and secured before the boom is raised.
- ◇ Never move the vehicle until the ladder is safely stored and secured (for ladder and tower trucks only) and all people are out of the basket (unless the equipment is specifically designed for such use).
- ◇ Never override hydraulic, mechanical or electrical safety devices.
- ◇ Never allow an aerial lift to be used as a crane or material lifting device.
- ◇ Do not make modifications to the aerial lift without a written certification from the manufacturer.
- ◇ Utilize fall protection at all times, and use the manufacturers'; designated anchor point.
- ◇ Always stand firmly on the floor and do not sit or climb on the edge or rails of the basket.
- ◇ Never use any kind of a device to elevate you above the basket, such as ladders.
- ◇ Avoid electrical power lines. Always assume they are energized.

Pre-Job Inspection

A hazard briefing should be performed before the start of each job. During this briefing, you and your supervisor should analyze the potential dangers of performing the job. Based on the analysis, choose a plan of attack and proper safety equipment to carry out the job.

Inspect Your Equipment

Always inspect your PPE prior to each days use to ensure its in good condition. If it's not, report it to your supervisor and replace equipment immediately. Check harnesses and lanyards for any defects, Check clips, buckles and rivets for breaks or cracks. Do not use fall protection equipment that is wet, saturated in chemicals, has been driven over, or has been stored in the sun. These factors will weaken the elasticity and strength of the rope. Check snap catches and carabiners to ensure they close securely and are appropriate for the system being used.

Inspect the Tree

Ensure the truck is stable by looking for cracks, splits, and cankers. Look for any dead and rotten branches. Watch for any nests, hives or other signs of animals in the tree. Look for poison ivy or oak growing on or around the tree.

Inspect the Location

If working near roadways, use warning signs and cones. Workers should have on high visibility vests and flaggers may be needed to divert traffic away from the area where work is being performed. The Municipal Uniform Traffic Code (MUTCD) must be followed. Limit access to the work area, and keep personnel out from under areas where cutting is being performed.

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