

Tree Work Safety

Tree work includes trimming, pruning, felling, and removal of trees and bushes. It involves climbing trees, using portable ladders, working at heights while using hand and portable power tools, working near energized overhead or downed power lines, feeding chippers, and other hazardous operations.

Accidents related to tree work can result in severe traumatic injuries and deaths. Commonly reported accidents include falls, electrocutions, and those caused by falling objects. Most accidents can be prevented by recognizing and controlling hazards in advance as well as training employees on safe work practices and effective use of personal protective equipment.

Cal/OSHA Requirements

Regulations that specifically apply to tree work are listed below, and can be found in the Title 8 California Code of Regulations (T8CCR)

Sections on Tree Work, Maintenance or Removal

3420	Scope and definition
3421	General requirements
3422	Tree workers' saddles
3423	General electrical hazards
3424	Mobile equipment
3425	Portable power hand tools
3426	Hand tools
3427	Safe work procedures

There are additional regulations that affect employers engaged in tree work. Among the most common are:

2940.2	Clearances from high-voltage power lines
3203	Injury and Illness Prevention Program
3328	Requirements for machinery and equipment
3380	Personal protective devices
3395	Heat illness prevention
3458	Fall protection for date palm operations
3648	Fall protection while working with aerial devices

How to Improve Tree Work Safety

To ensure tree worker safety, the employer should:

- Develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive health and safety program that includes written safety rules and safe work procedures for all tasks performed.
- Ensure that qualified tree workers direct tree trimming/removal/repair operations, and immediately correct any hazards or improper work practices identified.

QUALIFIED TREE WORKER

An employee who, through related training and on-the-job experience, has demonstrated familiarity with the techniques and hazards involved in tree maintenance, and removal, and use of special equipment.

- Create a company safety culture that encourages workers to establish safe habits, emphasizing the importance of safety and not taking risks or shortcuts.
- Provide safety training to employees to improve their knowledge and awareness of workplace hazards to help them perform their work more efficiently and safely. Safety training must be:
 - Practical and include a requirement for employees to demonstrate the ability to safely perform work on their own.
 - Completed prior to a job assignment.
 - Provided in language(s) workers understand.
 - Documented to establish proof of training.

Safety training must cover the following topics at a minimum:

- The job-specific hazards associated with tree work including electrical hazards.
- Safe work procedures and special techniques for performing tree pruning, trimming, and felling.
- Fall prevention equipment and practices.
- Methods of communication.
- First aid and CPR.
- Roadway safety.

- Rescue procedures (see additional information).
- Hazards associated with pesticide and fertilizer application.
- Proper use and maintenance of:
 - Safety equipment such as harnesses, belts, tree saddles, ropes, and lanyards. Inspect safety equipment before each use and immediately withdraw from service if found defective or damaged.
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hard hats, face shields, safety glasses, shoes, gloves, high-visibility clothing, and hearing protection.
 - Equipment and tools such as chippers, pole pruners, trimmers, and chain saws.
- Conduct an initial job site inspection and perform daily hazard assessments before the start of each work day to identify all existing hazards and other potentially dangerous conditions.
- Prior to the start of a job, have a qualified tree worker conduct a job briefing with the crew to communicate and discuss:
 - Specific hazards associated with the job before it starts or even while working, if a new hazard is discovered.
 - The appropriate work procedures to follow, e.g., the safest method to access a tree.
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment needed to accomplish work safely.
- Provide general information on safety to employees including:
 - Being attentive to what other workers are doing, as unexpected actions can create new hazards.
 - How to use high-visibility attire, and the importance of positioning themselves in order to be easily seen by others.
 - Staying alert to surrounding hazards at all times, especially while working uphill where gravity can send dangerous materials down toward other employees working at lower elevations.
- Check for weather updates and storm warnings. Take into account additional dangers that weather



conditions such as high winds, fog, ice, rain, high heat, thunder, and lightning can bring to the worksite and stop work, if necessary.

National Weather Service Website
<http://www.weather.gov/>

- Protect tree workers from heat-related illness. Provide adequate supplies of potable drinking water and encourage frequent consumption.



- Control pedestrian and vehicular traffic effectively, as needed.



- Establish rescue procedures and provide training in emergency response protocol. Provide training in aerial rescue procedures for employees whose job assignments may require them to perform aerial rescues.
- Provide at least two trained people who can administer first aid and CPR for field work involving two or more employees at a location.
- Have workers wear a tree workers' saddle and require at least two means of being secured when they work aloft.
- Make sure that employees are tied in or secured while ascending the tree and remain so until the work is done and they are back on the ground.

It is the employer's responsibility to provide proper tools, equipment, PPE, fall protection gear, and other items necessary to perform tree work safely.

Contacting Cal/OSHA Consultation Services

Publications: www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/PubOrder.asp

Consultation Programs: www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/consultation.html

Toll-free Number: **1-800-963-9424**

Onsite Assistance Program Area Offices

Central Valley: 559-454-1295

San Diego/Imperial: 619-767-2060

No. California: 916 263-0704

San Bernardino: 909-383-4567

SF/Bay Area: 510-622-2891

San Fernando Valley: 818-901-5754

La Palma/LA/Orange: 714-562-5525

The information is not neither a substitute for nor legal interpretation of the occupational safety and health regulations. Readers need to refer directly to Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations for detailed information regarding the regulation's scope, specifications, exceptions and for other requirements that may be applicable to their operations.