

KENTUCKY HAZ ALERT

To prevent tree trimmer injuries:

- Tree trimming or cutting should not be performed without appropriate safety training.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment should be worn at all times while removing trees.
- All trees and limbs should be inspected for structural weakness before work commences.
- Safe work procedures should be used for climbing, felling, topping, and pruning trees.
- A jobsite hazard assessment should be performed to identify hazards so that hazards can be controlled for.

RESIDENTIAL TREE TRIMMERS KILLED WHILE WORKING

During 2009, four tree trimmers were killed on residential properties in Kentucky. Following are the case descriptions for the four tree trimmer deaths:

Case 1: A 25-year-old male tree trimmer, whose primary occupation was a heavy equipment operator, was struck and killed when the tree he was cutting fell on him. The decedent was declared dead at the scene.

Case 2: After an ice storm, a 48-year-old male tree trimmer, who was a part-time employee in a construction company, was killed when a tree limb he was removing from a house struck the worker in the neck and knocked him off his ladder. The victim was transported to the nearest hospital and died in the emergency department.

Case 3: A 43-year-old male rental property owner, whose primary occupation was a public speaker, was trimming a tree on his rental property after an ice storm when one of the tree limbs fell and struck him in the head. The victim was transported to the nearest hospital where he was pronounced dead in the emergency department.

Case 4: A 30-year old arborist was hired by a private resident to remove trees from a yard. At approximately 5:00 PM, the arborist, along with a ground person, arrived at the residence. With the climb-



ing line and spurs, the arborist climbed the first tree. After trimming limbs from the tree trunk, the arborist began cutting the tree trunk one section at a time. The arborist was working at the fork of the tree and had cut a section of tree trunk which he had secured with a pull rope. The arborist then signaled his ground person that the section was free to be lowered to the ground. Unbeknownst to the arborist, his safety rope was connected to the tree trunk section to be lowered and he fell to the ground with the tree trunk section. The local coroner arrived and declared the arborist dead at the scene.

TREE TRIMMERS SHOULD WEAR APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT WHILE PERFORMING TREE TRIMMING ACTIVITIES.

TREE TRIMMING OR CUTTING SHOULD NOT BE PERFORMED WITHOUT APPROPRIATE SAFETY TRAINING.

All persons performing arborist activities should obtain the Certified Treecare Safety Professional certification. Certification requires education in safety, tree care, and proper business practices.

SAFE WORK PROCEDURES SHOULD BE USED FOR CLIMBING, FELLING, TOPPING, AND PRUNING TREES.

ANSI standard Z133.1 states that “Employers shall instruct their employees in the proper use, inspection, and maintenance of tools and equipment, including ropes and lines, and shall require that safe appropriate working practices be followed.”

APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE WORN AT ALL TIMES WHILE REMOVING TREES.

It is believed that the decedents were not wearing helmets in the above described incidents. OSHA standard 1910.135 states that head protection will be worn to protect workers from falling objects. ANSI standard Z89.1-2003 provides guidance on head protection for workers.

A JOBSITE HAZARD ASSESSMENT SHOULD BE PERFORMED TO IDENTIFY HAZARDS SO THAT HAZARDS CAN BE CONTROLLED FOR.

A jobsite hazard assessment should be part of an applicable written safety program based on ANSI standard Z133.1-2006, American National Standard for Arboricultural Operations– Safety Requirements. The jobsite analysis should include proper placement of ropes, proper equipment, root problems, stem decay, a weak crotch, and dead branches, among other hazards.

ALL TREES AND LIMBS SHOULD BE INSPECTED FOR STRUCTURAL WEAKNESS BEFORE WORK COMMENCES.

Stem factors such as splits, cracks, wounds, decay, and tree species should be considered when performing tree trimming operations. Branch factors such as cracks, splits, decay, dead branches, and weak crotches should also be examined. As part of the inspection, a pull test should be performed: the arborist sets a climbing line in the tree and pulls on the tree from all different directions to observe movement.

References:

1. NIOSH Alert: Preventing Falls and Electrocutions During Tree Trimming, DHHS publication 92-106.
2. Kentucky FACE Report #09KY059– Arborist Dies After Fall From Tree.
3. Kane, B. Pre-climb tree hazard assessment. Tree Care Industry April 2006.

Resources:

1. OSHA Quick Card: Tree Trimming & Removal Safety Tips. <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/3301-10-05-english-06-27-2007.html>
2. Fatal Injuries Among Landscape Services Workers. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2008-144/pdfs/2008-144.pdf>
3. Tree Care Industry Association. Tree Care Industry Association 136 Harvey Road, Suite 101, Londonderry, NH 03053, phone: 603-314-5380 603-314-5380 or Toll-free: 800-733-2622 800-733-2622

For more information, contact:

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