



Tree Trimming and Removal Safety

Tree trimming and removal can cause serious injuries, including contact with overhead power lines, falls from trees or being struck by falling trees or limbs. Injuries like these can be prevented with safe operating procedures and proper personal protective equipment (PPE). If you are not a tree-trimming expert with the necessary training, knowledge and proper equipment to cut and remove any type or size of tree, consider hiring a professional tree-trimming company.

What to wear

- High-visibility clothing
- Hard hat
- Safety glasses
- Steel toe shoes/boots
- Hearing protection
- Gloves
- Cut-resistant chaps – for ground crew operations
- No loose clothing
- No conductive clothing if working near power lines

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Additional Resources

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration - [Tree Trimming](#) and [Chainsaw Safety](#)
- National Ag Safety Database - [Tree Trimming Safety](#)
- Center for Disease Control - [Preventing Falls and Electrocutions During Tree Trimming](#)

Before Beginning Work

- Assess the work area, looking for any potential hazards.
 - Check trees for cracks, splits, rotting, dead branches or poison ivy.
 - Be sure that there are no nests, hives or animals living in the tree.
- Check for overhead power lines. Do not trim trees within 10 feet of a power line or use conductive equipment near power lines. All trimming and removal work this close to power lines must be done by trained and experienced line-clearance trimmers.
- Consider hiring a professional tree-trimming company if you do not have the tools or training to perform tree-trimming operations safely.
- If working along a roadway:
 - Set up warning signs.
 - Turn on vehicle hazard lights.
 - Chock the tires of trucks and equipment (especially if on a hill).
 - Use flaggers if the roadway is being used as a work surface.
 - Taper cones back from the corners of work vehicles and diagonally to the curb with enough space to allow employees to work safely.
- Inspect tree limbs for strength and stability before climbing.
- Inspect safety equipment before each use and immediately withdraw equipment from service if it is defective or damaged.
- If using a climber:
 - Develop a rescue plan.
 - Have an employee onsite who is trained in climbing and rescue operations.
 - Train ground crews to operate aerial lifts from the ground in the event of an emergency.

While You Work

Tree climbers – working aloft

- Use appropriate fall protection equipment including either a second climbing line or a work-positioning lanyard.
- Do not climb with tools in hand.
- Do not free-climb trees.
- Use a verbal and visual check to ensure the drop-zone is clear before beginning to cut.
 - E.g., the tree climber says, “Stand clear!” and the ground crew responds, “All clear!”
 - No worker shall enter the drop zone until all cutting has stopped.

Ground crew – working on the ground

- Position yourself where you can easily be seen by others.
- If felling a tree from the ground, only the chainsaw operator should be within two tree-lengths of the tree.
- Always leave yourself an out and make sure escape paths are completely clear before starting the felling process.
- Keep adequate distance from a tree that is being trimmed or felled.
- Do not turn your back to a tree that is being felled or where branches are being cut.
- Watch for falling branches.
- Do not use bucket trucks or other aerial devices to lower tree sections or limbs. If controlled lowering is required, use a crane or rope rigging separate from a climber.

