

Landscaping

Landscaping - Tree Trimming

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What should you do when tree trimming?

Set-up:

- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment. Some jurisdictions may have regulations about the type of training required for tree cutting and trimming.
- If an aerial bucket truck or other boomed vehicle is used, the operators must be trained in the safe operation of these vehicles.
- Before trimming a tree, inspect the area to identify possible hazards (e.g., presence of power lines, broken or cracked limbs after a severe storm) and take appropriate actions to prevent injuries or incidents.
- Assume any power lines are energized or "live". Avoid any direct or indirect contact with the power line until the utility or hydro company has verified that the line has been de-energized. (More information on working near [power lines](#) is below.)
- Mark off area around tree and prevent bystander access. Always work with another person who stays on the ground.
- Learn to recognize trees weakened by disease and types of trees prone to cracking.
- Inspect tree limbs for strength before climbing. Check for cavities in the tree, rotten or dead branches, splits and cracks in the trunk or where branches are attached, broken branches hanging in the tree, etc.

- Inspect the fall protection equipment and lines before each time they are used. Tag and remove any damaged or defective equipment from service until it can be repaired or replaced and disposed of properly, according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- If a ladder is used, tie it off on a secure branch.

Operation:

- Break small dead branches off by hand as you climb. Remove larger branches with proper tools.
- Place hands and feet on separate limbs and move only one hand or foot at a time.
- Raise or lower tools by attaching hand lines to the end of tools. Tools attached at the centre might catch on branches. Smaller tools may be raised and lowered in a bucket attached to a hand line.
- Use non-conductive tools and personal protective equipment if working near electrical power lines.
- Be sure that you can see the cut you are making so you do not cut hand lines, safety ropes, etc. unintentionally.
- Attach a fibre or leather guard on saws that are held by a ring on worker's belt.
- The series of OSH Answers on [chain saws](#) contains safety information about their proper use and operation.

There are many tips in other [Landscaping](#) OSH Answers documents.

What should you avoid when trimming trees?

- Do not use dead branches for support.
 - Do not climb trees during wet or icy weather or under high wind conditions.
 - Do not leave partially sawn limbs on trees.
 - Do not carry saws, pruners and other tools while climbing.
 - Do not use axes or hatchets.
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What are safety tips for using ropes?

- Inspect regularly for flaws along the entire length of the rope.
- Move ropes slowly over limbs or through crotches to prevent friction damage.

- Keep ropes coiled when not in use.
 - Store ropes in ventilated boxes and protected from weather.
 - Never use safety lines for raising and lowering equipment or tree limbs.
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What are safety tips when working near power lines?

- Contact the power utility company before working on trees near power lines to arrange for ways to protect the employees (e.g., cutting off the power to the lines and grounding them or using insulating blankets on the power lines).
 - Know the minimum working distances from "live" power lines for the voltage they are conducting.
 - Use proper ropes with appropriate carriers and hooks for raising and lowering equipment.
 - Use a pull rope to prevent branches from falling toward power lines.
 - Use non-conducting tools and equipment.
 - Wear rubber gloves when using a pole pruner.
 - Ensure that the pole pruner's cutting head is connected to the lever at the lower end of the pole with a polypropylene rope. Do not use a wire or chain.
 - Apply and maintain a coating of non-conductive, wood preservative to help keep wooden pruner handles dry.
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What should you avoid when working near power lines?

- Do not approach fallen power lines.
 - Do not grasp the pruner closer than four feet from the metal head.
 - Do not use wet or moist pruners near power lines.
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What should you know about Personal Protective Equipment?

- Use approved safety belts, lifelines, and leather gauntlet gloves.
- Wear head and eye protection and footwear protection with slip-resistant soles.
- Choose close-fitting, long-sleeved clothing.

See the [Personal Protective Equipment](#) OSH Answers for more information.

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