



Big Time Danger (Tree Trimming)

Trimming tree branches and limbs prior to felling is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of general site clearing. Tree limbs growing near or in possible contact with overhead power or communication lines are a potential source of trouble.

Tree Trimming

A safe **trimming program** should include the following precautions:

- Established and observed safety rules,
- Trained and qualified workers,
- Properly maintained tools and equipment, and
- First-Aid services.

There are specialized workers who perform spot trimming for specific emergency problems that involve wire or public hazards. Some utilities, municipalities, and transportation companies establish seasonal tree crews from various departments.

Although tree trimming and related activities present many common hazards, (such as cuts and bruises from limbs and machinery) injuries generally occur from the following hazards: energized wires, falling trees and limbs, improper climbing and working methods, high-speed moving parts on power equipment, and high-decibel noise levels from power machinery.

Equipment will vary from one company to another. Workers should use a Full Body Harness and Safety Lanyards.

Because of their electrical conductivity, metal ladders should **not** be used. Straight or extension ladder side rails should be provided with anti-slip devices. Some ladders have top rungs made of fabric, which will conform to the shape of a tree.

Power Tools

A **stump grinder** is a gasoline driven mechanical device with rotating teeth, it shreds tree stumps to below ground levels. The following procedures should be used when operating power stump grinders:

- The tightness of grinder teeth lock bolts is critical and should be spot checked before each day's operations.
- Hearing protectors should be worn by operators when engine mufflers fail to control engine noise below 90 decibels.

- Personal protective equipment should be worn by operators to prevent injury from flying chips, rocks, dirt, and other high velocity debris.
- Grinder shutdown switches must be located within immediate reach of the operator of the controls.

Power chain saw safety rules include:

- Any employee permitted to operate a portable power chain saw must be qualified to do so.
- No one except an operator should be allowed within a six-foot radius of a one man power chain saw.
- Small power chain saws, equipped with approved safety cutting chains and weighing less than 20 pounds, may be used above the shoulder level, provided that the following precautions are observed:
 1. saws are suspended from a rope and crotched above the cutting area, and
 2. when climbing a felled tree, the severed branches are removed from the path of the operator as he/she progresses.
- Electrically operated power chain saws should not be utilized from the baskets or hydraulic aerial devices.
- Engines or motors should be shut off when moving a power chain saw from one location to another.
- Refueling should be done in an area free from flammable materials.
- Chain saw operators should wear approved eye protection.

Tree trimming and related activities are extremely dangerous, and only trained and experienced personnel should engage in this specialized activity.