Tree Trimming Safety Fatality File

FALL

A 27-year-old tree trimmer (the victim) was working as part of a four-man crew to remove dead trees from a private home in a semi-rural area. The crew had been on the site for 2 days and had removed four large trees. They were working on the fifth tree and had cut off all of the tree limbs. Even though each tree was checked for rot by tapping on the trunk, the crew was unaware of the presence of wood wasps in the upper trunk—a sign of rot. At midmorning, the victim (wearing a saddle belt attached to a cloth lanyard) climbed the tree to cut it away in sections. While ascending the tree, the victim reportedly realized that the tree was more damaged than expected, stopped climbing at approximately 35 feet, and tied off at that height. The rotted tree had a list of approximately 10 to 15 degrees, and as the top section was cut away, the tree bent with it.

As the tree sprang back to its original position, the backlash was strong enough to fracture the trunk 6 feet below the cut area where the victim had tied his lanyard. The tree trimmer died when he fell to the ground with the tree section, which landed on top of him.

ELECTROCATION

A 27-year-old tree-trimming groundman (the victim), three coworkers, and a foreman were clearing brush and trees from an electric utility right-of-way. The victim and three coworkers were cutting and removing brush at ground level beneath the power line. Another tree trimmer in an aerial lift bucket was simultaneously clearing limbs near the 23,000-volt energized power line. At the time of the incident, the tree trimmer positioned the aerial bucket between the bottom energized phase of the three- phase

power line and a lower neutral conductor. He extended the boom and bucket through the conductors to a tree on the opposite side of the power line. The tree trimmer then climbed out of the bucket into the tree to proceed with the tree-trimming operation. The foreman climbed onto the aerial bucket to retract the boom and bucket using the controls mounted on the boom pedestal. As he repositioned the boom, it contacted the power line, allowing current to flow through the uninsulated boom and truck to the ground. The victim, who was standing on the ground in contact with the aerial bucket truck, was electrocuted.