Tree Trimming Safety Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Tree trimming operations require climbing, pruning, and felling trees. Hand and portable power tools such as loppers, trimmers, and chainsaws make the necessary cuts. Aerial lifts and chippers bring workers to the right height and clean up the worksite.

What’s the Danger

TREE TRIMMING

Trees are beautiful and enhance the character of our neighborhoods. But trees can also cause problems.

THREE REASONS TO TRIM OR PRUNE A TREE

Aesthetics – Pruning a tree helps to maintain its shape and appearance. You shouldn’t try to impose an unnatural shape or size on a tree. The amount of trimming and pruning that will be needed could seriously damage it.

Safety – Dead or broken branches and limbs can fall off at any time, which is a serious safety hazard. If the branches of a tree obstruct your vision while driving, they should be trimmed away. Finally, tree limbs and branches occasionally grow too close to utility lines. Contact the utility company to handle such issues.

Health – It is sometimes possible to save an infected tree by strategically pruning away affected branches and limbs. Thinning the crown of a tree improves airflow, which can be very beneficial. If branches are crossing or rubbing together, they should be trimmed, or removed so that they don’t fall unexpectedly.

- never drop start a chain saw when working on the ground.

- wear cut resistant leg protection, hearing and eye protection when using a chainsaw.
- start and warm up the chainsaw before climbing to prevent starting difficulty while the climber is on the tree.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

BEST GENERAL TREE TRIMMING PRACTICES

- It’s almost always best to trim or prune a tree during its dormant season. Although you can technically prune a pine tree at any time, it is still better to do so when it is dormant. The only exception is when a hazard exists.
- Be conscientious about the size of the branch that you are going to remove. If it is less than five centimeters in diameter, removing it is fine. If it is between five and 10 centimeters in diameter, you might not want to do it. If it is more than 10 centimeters in diameter, you should only do so if you have a really good reason.
- Only trim branches that have weak, V-shaped, narrow angles. Retain branches that have strong, U-shaped angles.
- Lateral branches should be between one-half and three-quarters the diameter of the stem at point of attachment. Otherwise, they should be removed.
- When pruning is complete, the ratio of living crown to tree height should be two-thirds.
- Try to prune away branches when they are young. They are much easier to manage at that point, and the risk of leaving nasty scars is much lower.
- Don’t trim a branch too close or too long. You shouldn’t leave a large stub or remove the branch collar.

PROPER PLANNING AVOIDS WORKER INJURIES

- only competent persons should undertake the assessment of trees and sites, planning and preparation of the work method.
- determine appropriate control measures in consultation with workers and document the safe work method to serve as

evidence of managing risks.
- discuss the control measures at the tool box talk.
- consider conducting a site-specific risk assessment.
- the risks that are common to many jobs may not be re-assessed but persons undertaking the work must be familiar with the current control measures in place.
- use plant and equipment only within its capabilities and in accordance with manufacturer’s recommendations.

TRAINING – BEST ANTIDOTE FOR WORKER SAFETY IN TREE TRIMMING

Training should be documented and delivered to each worker before they are assigned on the job.

- Job-specific hazards associated with tree work.
- Safe work practices and special techniques for tree pruning, trimming, and felling.
- Proper and safe use of all equipment.
- How to identify and prevent contact with common poisonous plants and harmful animals.
- Pesticide and fertilizer applications for employees using and exposed to them, if applicable.
- Electrical hazard identification and prevention.
- Fall prevention equipment and practices.
- Communication methods.
- Roadway safety.

REFRESHER TRAINING AVOIDS COMPLACENCY AND NEGLIGENCE

Refresher or additional training is required for any employee who has:

- Been observed to violate the safe work practices required by Cal/OSHA.
- Been involved in an accident or near miss.
- Been assigned a new job that includes the use of equipment, machinery, tools, or tasks new to the employee.

FINAL WORD

The key to controlling hazards and preventing injuries and accidents in tree and ornamental palm maintenance is through extensive training and experience for all of the workers involved in the operation. Most importantly, each worksite should be overseen by a qualified tree worker with the proper training and experience to direct correct work methods and prevent injuries and accidents.