Working Safely with Ornamental Trees: Protecting Yourself, Your Team, and Your Trees Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. **Falls from Height:** Tree and ornamental workers climb ladders, trees, or use aerial lifts—falls are common and deadly. Consistent use of harnesses, guardrails, and bucket-truck tie-offs is essential.
2. **Struck-by Hazards:** Branches, trees, tools, or equipment can strike workers or coworkers during pruning or felling. Helmets, high-vis gear, and team communication are critical.
3. **Electrocution Risk:** Branches or tools that contact live overhead lines cause about 14% of fatalities among tree workers. Maintaining clearance and wearing insulated gear is vital.
4. **Chainsaw & Tool Injuries:** Chainsaws and handsaws can cause severe cuts, burns, and eye injuries—use chainsaw chaps, gloves, eye/face protection, and ensure tools are well-maintained.
5. **Noise & Hearing Damage:** Power tools and chipper noise exceed safe levels—wear ear protection consistently.
6. **Buddy System & Rescue Preparedness:** Many climbers work alone—lack of ground-based rescue personnel contributes to delayed emergency response. Teams must always work in pairs with rescue gear onsite.

STATS

- In 2024, OSHA recorded 5,190 workplace fatalities, with landscaping and tree care reporting ~100 cases (2%). Falls (40%) and struck-by incidents from branches or equipment

(20%) were leading causes, emphasizing fall protection and hard hats.

- In 2024, PPE violations (29 CFR 1910.132) ranked 6th in construction and related industries (1,876 citations), including inadequate gloves or HVSA for tree workers. Fall Protection (29 CFR 1926.501) violations ranked 1st (5,423 citations), critical for tree climbing.
- A 2022 NIOSH study found that 25% of tree care workers exposed to pesticides lacked proper chemical-resistant gloves or respirators, increasing risks of skin irritation or respiratory issues.
- WorkSafeBC reported 25–30 annual construction-related fatalities in British Columbia (2020–2023), with tree care workers at risk from falls (35%) and struck-by incidents (15%) during pruning or planting. Hard hats and HVSA are critical.
- In 2024, Ontario introduced fines up to $500,000 for repeat OHS violations, including PPE non-compliance, impacting tree care firms failing to provide proper safety gear.