



# Weekly Safety Meeting

---

## Tree Work and Pruning Operations

Spring is the time of year that many home and business owners request tree services such as tree removal, trimming, and pruning. Overgrown branches often fall in the least ideal of situations, causing downed power lines. During the winter, heavy ice and snow, and during the spring, high winds and rain can cause downed trees and lines. Caution is especially necessary when cleaning up or tree trimming during extreme weather and in areas around energized lines.

### Arborists and Trees

Arborists face many job hazards such as gas-powered equipment (e.g. chainsaws and woodchippers), working at heights, and falling trees and branches. Tree work is dangerous, often resulting in fall and struck-by injuries.

### Utility Workers and Trees

Electric Utility Company workers are experienced in trimming and removing trees near high voltage power lines. Laws vary by state, but in general, utility companies must maintain the safety of their lines by cutting back entire trees or overgrowth along the power lines. These workers may have to have the power lines deenergized/turned off to complete work. Trees that are touching power lines can be an electrocution risk, especially if they are wet, because they can conduct electricity. Utility workers might use a crane or bucket truck to remove trees, but if there are many electrical hazards, climbing the tree might actually be the safest option.

### Proposed Tree Care Work Standard

OSHA does not have specific tree work standards yet, but they are in development. In 2008, a rule was proposed to become a new standard in 29 CFR Part 1910: Tree Care Operations. A proposed rule is in development that would best address industry safety and health concerns, focusing on arboricultural specific uses of equipment. However, that rule has not been published as of 3/2025.

The OSHA Standards for the Tree Care Industry must comply with all the general industry standards (29 CFR 1910). State Plan Standards may have more stringent requirements and additional Federal Register notices specifically address logging operations and electric power.

### Common Tree Work Injuries

Tree Care and utility line workers should be aware of the physical demands and inherent hazards of the work. Musculoskeletal injuries are very common when climbing trees and lifting heavy limbs and

equipment, especially when working at heights or twisting at odd angles. Other physical hazards include loud noise, dehydration, and fatigue.

## Tree Trimming Safety Tips

- Always stay alert!
- Don't trim trees in dangerous weather conditions.
- Perform a hazard assessment before any tree work.
- Always assume that power lines are energized.
- Use PPE such as gloves, safety glasses, hard hats, hearing and fall protection/harness as needed.
- Ground personnel should stay clear of the fall radius of branches.
- Be aware of felling direction.
- Notch the tree properly on the fall side before cutting the back to release the pressure.
- Never climb with anything (e.g. tools, equipment) in your hands.
- Make sure you receive adequate training and PPE before performing tree work.
- Any tree trimming within ten feet of a power line must be done by trained line-clearance tree trimmers. A second tree trimmer must be within voice range any time a person is cutting above.

It is hard to keep up with tree growth when it comes to maintaining them and the power lines that have the "right-of-way" of trees near them. When tree work must be done, worker health and safety should come first, especially when working in the aftermath of severe weather near power lines. Don't take a risk when it comes to safety. Make sure you receive training by your employer on the job, equipment, safety practices and PPE, and that they answer any questions you have.

***TREE WORK IS UNPREDICTABLE...PREPARE FOR THE LEAST EXPECTED!***

