

Who Are The Men In Your Trees

Fred Evans of Santa Ynez Valley Tree Care tells readers why and how to hire a licensed, insured, knowledgeable, and honest tree care company that always requires safety first from its workers. Through on-going training and the use of top quality, professional equipment, safety is our company's #1 priority.

Taken alone, tree worker would rank number five on the "top 10" list of dangerous occupations, right behind high steel construction workers.

Looking at the risk this way, the odds of having a fatal accident in any given year for construction workers is about 1 in 10,000. For Police it is about 1 in 8,200 and Firefighters about 1 in 6,500. How about for tree workers? It is about 1 in 3,000. This makes tree work one of the highest risk occupations in any community.

What types of accidents occur in the tree care profession? The greatest two hazards for tree workers are in the categories "contact with an object" and "falls". Collectively these two categories accounted for more than 2 out of 3 tree worker fatalities during the decade of the 1990's.

Contact with an object is the category with the highest number of fatalities. The age range for fatalities in this category was 12 to 60. It is shocking to see the number of workers under the age of 18 who are killed while working on a tree crew. They are killed the same way many workers are killed-being ground workers and being struck by a falling branch or tree. Other accidents in this category are contact with chippers and chain saws.

If a worker is killed by a falling limb, increasingly it is due to a rigging failure. Another common cause for a worker being killed by a falling branch is climbers who cut branches and let them fall without alerting ground workers or, a dead limb breaking free as the tree is felled. In a recent accident a tree worker was struck and killed by a falling tree because he walked across the path of its fall as he dragged brush to a chipper.

Another cause of workers being struck by a falling tree is having the tree fail due to internal decay while making a felling cut. Assessing the structural integrity of a tree before working in it or removing it is imperative. Even more surprising are the climbers who have died because they climbed a tree to remove some limbs after the tree was notched. The tree fails the climber falls with the tree and is often crushed by the impact.

How about falls? The age range for fatal falls was 17 to 67. Fall fatalities have occurred at less than 10 feet. Tree workers have been killed from 5 and 13 foot falls from a tree when they hit their head on pavement or nearby equipment.

Repositioning is one of highest risk activities for climbers. The lanyard is unsnapped, the worker is unsecured, balance is lost and the worker falls. The other common reason is the climbing line is severed.

There are many more reasons for accidents and fatalities while working in trees such as electrocution, misuse of ladders, and falls from bucket trucks.

Santa Ynez Valley Tree Care encourages homeowners to hire professionally trained tree trimmers. Your gardener, fence man, pool guy and the like **ARE NOT** trained to take on the job of trimming trees. They **DO NOT** have the proper licensing, insurance, and knowledge necessary to handle this type of work. And, most importantly, you the homeowner are responsible if any licensed or unlicensed party, who is uninsured, is injured or killed while working on your property. Not all licensed contractors are insured.

So to fully protect yourself, Santa Ynez Valley Tree Care suggests that you visit www.syvtreecare.com (choosing a contractor), www.cslb.ca.gov, "10 tips for making sure your contractor measures up" or call the State Contractor License Board at 1-800-321-CSLB.

The CSLB will be able to tell you if a tree-trimming contractor is properly licensed (D-49& C-61), have liability insurance, are bonded, have workers compensation insurance, and more.

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