

TOOLBOX TALKS

Tree Trimming and Removal

Toolbox Talks are intended to facilitate health and safety discussions on the job site. For additional Toolbox Talks, please visit SAFETY.CAT.COM™

SAFETY.CAT.COM™

TOPIC: Tree Trimming and Removal

Introduction

The hazards associated with trimming trees cannot be underestimated. **The U.S. Department of Labor reports nearly 1,300 fatalities related to tree trimming and removal from 1992-2007.** Over half of these fatalities occurred on private property and over 60% were from being struck by the felled limb. Another 15% of the total was caused by electrocution. Review the following safety tips to help ensure safe and effective tree trimming and removal.

Inspect the Tree, Work Area and Equipment:

- Make sure chainsaws and other cutting equipment are in good condition and equipment guarding is in place. Verify chains are properly lubricated.
- Verify there are no power lines in the area. If so, make sure they are de-energized. If energy dissipation is not possible, assign a 2nd person on the ground to help communicate potential hazards and felling directions while cutting. Never cut within 10 feet of an energized power line that is less than 50 kV. For lines rated over 50 kV, the minimum clearance shall be 10 feet plus 4 inches for each 10 kV over 50 kV, or twice the length of the line insulator, but never less than 10 feet..
- Inspect the tree for dead limbs, and limbs under high stress, and understand how this will impact the cutting sequence and felling direction.
- Determine the best way to access the trimming area. Will you be using a ladder, an aerial lift or some other method? In every case, verify there is secure footing. Again, be mindful of power line locations.

Before and during cutting:

- Always wear the proper PPE. Safety goggles are a necessity due to flying chips. Fall protection harnesses and lanyards may be required. Long pants, sleeves and protective helmets are also required for safe operation.
- Do not trim in windy and wet conditions, nor when lightning is present.
- Cut a line or wedge on the opposite side of the branch to best direct the felling direction and minimize stress on the limb.
- Watch out for kick-back of the limb. This is one of the most common and dangerous safety hazards. Never turn your back while the limb is falling.
- Always maintain 3 points of contact when climbing up or down ladders and limbs.
- Use good ergonomics. Do not over reach and create additional hazards, such as muscles strains or pulls, or imbalance and shifting of ladders.

Questions to Generate Discussion

- Why is (limb) kickback such a dangerous safety hazard? What are some of the things that can be done to reduce kickback hazards?

Discussion Date: _____

Employee Participants:

The material in this document is provided for informational purposes only and not as a comprehensive or exhaustive resource on this topic. This material has been compiled from a multitude of sources believed to be accurate; however, Caterpillar Inc. assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or currency of this information and encourages you to consult experts in this area for more information. In no event does the content of this document supersede any applicable local, state, or federal statutes or regulations.

Control ID: V0111.1

SAFETY.CAT.COM™
<http://safety.cat.com/toolbox>

CAT, CATERPILLAR, their respective logos, "Caterpillar Yellow" and the POWER EDGE trade dress, as well as corporate and product identity used herein, are trademarks of Caterpillar and may not be used without permission. © 2009 Caterpillar All Rights Reserved

