



Arboricultural Work Safe Working Practices

Before attempting any work of an arboricultural nature the employee must have attended a course of formal training (see Training). A competent person must complete a risk assessment where individual characteristics, of the task have changed, e.g. weather conditions or place of work.

Inspection of Equipment

All equipment must be inspected daily and the appropriate records maintained prior to use.

- Inspect all wooden handled tools for splinters, cracks and splits - ensure that handles are fitted correctly.
- Inspect metal tools for fatigue fractures and cracks. Hammers, metal wedged picks, should be checked for burring around the striking area of the tool, burring must be immediately ground off.
- Ropes, Harnesses and Belts should be inspected before use and at intervals throughout the period they are in use. All ropes must comply with the British Standard 3104 (nylon ropes), BS3998 (other ropes). The ends of all ropes should be spliced or in the case of nylon ropes, burned and fused together to prevent fraying. If fraying occurs anywhere along the length of the rope, immediately discard it and use one that complies with the B.S. Regulations. Pay attention to storage - care must be taken to ensure that ropes, harnesses and belts etc. do not come in contact with sharp edged tools. They must be hung on pegs or stored in a specially constructed box. All personal safety equipment should never be used for any purposes other than those intended.
- Ladders should be inspected daily - look for splits or fractures, and loose rungs, ensure the pulleys are working properly and the ropes are in good condition. When erected, keep a check on excessive whip from side to side or abnormal bowing when being climbed. The appropriate grade of ladder must be used in accordance with HSE guidance.
- Mechanical equipment is provided to improve work rate and reduce manual effort. It is essential, therefore, that all mechanical equipment is kept in perfect condition and that regular inspections are carried out. Guards are always to be in place when equipment is in use. Maintenance records are to be maintained and inspected by supervisors at frequent intervals.

Chain saws (see Chain Saws) (Only certified competent persons may use chain saws.) If authorised to use chain/power saws inspect your Power Saw for:-

- Metal fatigue in all moveable parts, in the cutting chain and in the handle grips.
- Correct tension of the cutting chain.
- Obstructions to the cutting chain.
- Correct guards are fitted to give the maximum and most effective protection.
- Metal fatigue in all parts of the equipment.
- Fraying of the steel cables.
- Correct seating of the hooks and eyes affixed to the cables.

The Use of Equipment

Great care must be taken when using all items of equipment relative to this work. The following information and instructions must be adhered to at all times.

- When using hammers, axes, picks etc., ensure that no other person is in close proximity of the striking area.
- When using harnesses, saddles etc., ensure they are correctly fastened and secured and that the safety lines will not snag or become trapped in forks or branches through which they will run. Ensure the anchorage is sufficient to hold the weight of the person using the harness when sudden pressure is applied to the life line.
- When using ropes, ensure that the correct knots are used. Do not stand on or in the surplus coils of rope on the ground. When lowering pieces of wood, ensure the rope is anchored in such a manner as to enable you to lower the timber down slowly and that the breaking strain of the rope is twice that of its load.

When using a power saw, several pointers in relation to its use should be observed (see separate guidance on CHAIN SAWS).

- When starting the saw, ensure a firm and correct stance; do not stand over the saw blade; make sure it is pointing away from you.
- The operator must make sure that no other person is in the immediate area where the saw is being used.
- To avoid risk of stumbling etc. ensure that the floor area where the saw is being used is free of obstacles.
- Inspect the Winch
- When using the saw in a tree, ensure it is secured to a safety line as a precaution against 'dropping' the saw
- Do not climb trees or ladders with the engine running.
- Keep all harnesses, ropes etc., away from the area where saws are being used.
- During power saw maintenance ensure the engine is turned off and remove the plug cap.

- Winch - ensure when using the winch that the anchor line is securely fitted. When fastening the cable to the tree you intend to pull over, make sure that it is properly secured and will take the pressure which is to be applied. When applying pressure to the winch, ensure that if for some reason the line has to be slackened, that pressure is released by the same number of men who applied.

Protective Clothing

It is essential that the correct protective clothing is worn for this work.

- (i) Clothing should be strong, sound and of a type not easily caught or torn.
- (ii) Do not wear any form of outer garments, such as an overcoat, oilskin or scarf. It is impractical and highly dangerous.
- (iii) Safety boots should be worn in preference to safety shoes - the soles should be of rubber substitute. On no account should leather or hobnails be used.
- (iv) Safety helmets preferably one without a rim or peak, must be worn.
- (v) Goggles and ear defenders must be worn when using power saws.
- (vi) High visibility jackets must be worn at all times when working on the highway.

Tree Work - General

At least two persons must work as a team. In the event of an accident there must be someone present to render assistance.

Trees must not be climbed when wet or during storms, high winds or extreme cold, except in emergencies. Normally only one person should be in any one tree at any one time.

All precautions to ensure safety to the general public should be implemented by roping off, display of warning signs and cones etc. At least one person should remain on the ground to supervise these precautions.

Tree Work on the Highways

Refer to the booklet for "Good Workers and Supervisors" entitled 'Safer Road Works Ahead' for guidance. This booklet was revised in May 1991 and is based on the Department of Transport 'Traffic Signs Manual' (Chapter 8) revised and republished in 1991.

Inform the Police

Display correct warning signs plus cones, to include 'Road Work' sign depicting 'TREE WORK'.

Where pedestrian traffic is heavy, the working area should be adequately marked by means of ropes, fluorescent tape or fencing or similar. At least one person should remain on the ground to supervise these precautions.

The Supervisor/Foreman/Chargehand must ensure that the staff are wearing the necessary high visibility clothing.

When working adjacent to underground or overhead power or telephone lines, gas mains, water mains etc., inform the appropriate Area Engineer and agree safety precautions and clearances. Work in teams of not less than two.

Where power lines are involved never work in wet conditions; exercise utmost care with metal ladders, pruners and hand tools.

When working near high voltage overhead power lines, no person or equipment or parts of a tree should be allowed to come within at least 10ft (3m) of the nearest point or any live conductor. If necessary, ropes must be used to ensure that parts of a tree being removed fall away from the lines.

Works vehicles must be equipped with an Amber Rotating hazard light for use on the highway.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 particularly refer.