

## INCIDENT FACTS

### REPORT #:

71-269-2025

### REPORT DATE:

August 4, 2025

### INCIDENT DATE:

December 1, 2023

### VICTIM:

36 years old

### INDUSTRY:

Landscaping Services

### OCCUPATION:

Tree Trimmer

### SCENE:

Private residence

### EVENT TYPE:

Fall from elevation



Area where trimmer was cutting branches.

[For a slideshow version, click here.](#)



This narrative was developed to alert employers and workers of a tragic incident and is based on preliminary data ONLY and does not represent final determinations regarding the nature of the incident or the cause of the injury. Developed by WA State Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (WA FACE) Program and the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), WA State Dept. of Labor & Industries. WA FACE is supported in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH grant# 5U60OH008487). For more information visit [www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face](http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/ongoing-projects/work-related-fatalities-face).

## Tree Trimmer Falls 50 Feet While Cutting Branches

### SUMMARY

A 36-year-old experienced tree trimmer died when he fell 50 feet while cutting branches. He worked for his employer, a local tree care service, for just over a year.

He was the climber on a five-member crew removing a 120-foot Fir tree. His personal protective equipment (PPE) and work gear included a helmet, safety glasses, gloves, climbing spikes, saddle (harness), a rope flip line (lanyard), a rappelling line (lifeline), and a rigging line. He had a handsaw and chainsaw to cut branches. He climbed about 50 feet up the tree, cutting branches along the way. Just after, he screamed and fell backwards to the pavement. He had cut his flip line with his chainsaw.

His coworkers, who were clearing dropped branches on the ground, saw him fall and ran to his aid. They began CPR and called 911 and the employer. First responders came, began lifesaving efforts, and transported him to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Following the incident, investigators found:

- The worker knew the hazards of not using a lifeline while working at heights but decided to use his rope flip line as his only point of attachment. He had a second rope or lifeline on his saddle but did not tie it off as required by [ANSI Z133-2017-6.3](#) when using a chainsaw.
- The employer and crew supervisor allowed the trimmer to use a personally owned, lighter, soft-fiber rope as a flip line instead of requiring him to use a heavier, cut-resistant steel-core line that they provided to him. The supervisor told investigators they routinely allowed trimmers to use gear that was comfortable or easier to handle in order to maintain their climbing confidence.
- The employer and supervisor did a site assessment and led two morning pre-job crew meetings.
- The employer had an outdated accident prevention program (APP) and did not conduct and document safety meetings, PPE hazard assessments and effective worker orientation and training.

### REQUIREMENTS

#### Employers must:

- Make sure arborists tie in and use a second means of being secured [e.g., lanyard (work positioning lanyard) or second climbing line] when operating a chainsaw in a tree. See [ANSI Z133 2017 Chainsaws 6.3.6](#)
- Provide your employees a workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing, or are likely to cause, serious injury or death. See [WAC 296-800-11005](#)
- Document hazard assessments and training for PPE and safety meetings. See [WAC 296-800-16010](#), [WAC 296-800-16035](#), [WAC 296-800-13025\(2\)](#)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### FACE investigators concluded, that to help prevent similar occurrences, employers should:

- Develop and enforce policies and standard operating procedures (SOP) in their APP that require tree trimmers:
  - To always use steel-core flip lines, except near power lines, and high-strand rope lifelines for a second point of attachment. Climbing gear should be top quality, reputable, and arborist-certified.
  - To have documented recurring training in arborist fall protection systems, including PPE and climbing gear identification and proper inspection, use, cleaning, maintenance, and storage.

### RESOURCES

[National Tree Climbing Guide](#) – United States Forest Service



Cut flip line on saddle.