Arboricultural ASSOCIATION
trees.org.uk

Safety Guide 2:
Use of Tools in the Tree

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This leaflet provides an overview of safety guidance for anyone who is required to use tools as part of tree work operations. The guidance is summarised from the Technical Guide on the subject (TG2): *Use of Tools in the Tree*.

It contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

When applying the principles and guidance laid out here, a decision must be made as to whether it is necessary to climb the tree, or whether work may be carried out from the ground or from a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP). Many of the techniques described can be carried out when accessing the tree either by MEWP or by climbing.

For guidance on making that decision, reference should be made to the *Industry Code of Practice for Arboriculture: Tree Work at Height* (ICoP). Climbing should only be undertaken when it is not reasonably practicable to do the work from ground level or from a platform, in that order.

1.2 Everyone using tools in tree work operations can use this leaflet as outline safety guidance to check that operators are following industry guidance.

1.3 This leaflet is not a substitute for adequate training.

1.4 This leaflet is not a substitute for the full Technical Guide.

1.5 In accordance with the ICoP, the key principles of tree work at height must be adopted when using this leaflet.

It is essential that:

a. all work at height is properly planned, organised, supervised and managed;
b. lifting (and lowering) systems are properly designed, including the compatibility and correct configuration of components within each system;
c. any equipment used is suitable for the task and subject to periodic inspection and examination;
d. maintenance of equipment is carried out to ensure all equipment remains safe for use; *and*
e. everyone engaged in a tree work operation has the appropriate training and experience to be proficient in tasks they are required to undertake.

1.6 For further guidance you should consult Technical Guide 2: *Use of Tools in the Tree* and undertake appropriate training.

2.0 Planning

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
2.a	Has a suitable and sufficient recorded risk assessment been carried out?	☐	☐	☐
2.b	Do operators understand the risk assessment?	☐	☐	☐
2.c	Have the specified control measures been carried out?	☐	☐	☐
2.d	Does the risk assessment process include dealing with emergencies?	☐	☐	☐
2.e	Is there an opportunity for everyone on site to contribute to the site-specific risk assessment on the day of works?	☐	☐	☐
2.f	Are enough personnel present, including provision for rescue?	☐	☐	☐
2.g	Has enough time been allocated to allow the work to be carried out safely and without putting undue pressure on the operational team?	☐	☐	☐
2.h	Are wildlife considerations included as part of the site-specific risk assessment process?	☐	☐	☐
2.i	Are proactive biosecurity measures being implemented by the operational team?	☐	☐	☐
2.j	Are all operators aware of the extent of the drop zone and the procedures in place for managing entry to it?	☐	☐	☐
2.k	Is a command-and-response-type communication procedure in place and being used effectively?	☐	☐	☐

3.0 Work Quality

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
3.a	Can operators correctly interpret work specifications?	☐	☐	☐
3.b	Does the standard of work carried out by operators meet the specification and is it carried out in accordance with the instructing party's requirements?	☐	☐	☐
3.c	Is there demonstrable evidence – such as site safety audits – to show operators are working in accordance with good practice?	☐	☐	☐

4.0 Work Equipment

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
4.a	Is a suitable range of work equipment available for operators to use?	☐	☐	☐
4.b	Where practical, has equipment been selected to minimise risk to the operator?	☐	☐	☐
4.c	Is the equipment selected appropriate to the task to be carried out?	☐	☐	☐
4.d	Are operators adequately trained to use the equipment required for the task?	☐	☐	☐

5.0 Inspection and Maintenance of Work Equipment

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
5.a	Is machinery free from defect and safe to operate?	☐	☐	☐
5.b	Are safety features present, intact and functioning?	☐	☐	☐
5.c	Has a suitable and sufficient inspection of machinery been carried out?	☐	☐	☐
5.d	Has maintenance been carried out in line with manufacturer's guidance?	☐	☐	☐

6.0 PPE Selection for Cutting Tools

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
6.a	Are operators wearing PPE appropriate to the equipment they are using?	☐	☐	☐
6.b	Is the PPE in use clearly labelled to show it has been manufactured to relevant standards?	☐	☐	☐
6.c	Are operators carrying adequate first aid provision?	☐	☐	☐
6.d	Are suitable facilities for hand hygiene available?	☐	☐	☐

7.0 Equipment Hauling

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
7.a	Has the climber adopted an approach that minimises the risk of accidental equipment release?	☐	☐	☐
7.b	Is there clear communication between climber and ground staff when equipment is being hauled?	☐	☐	☐
7.c	Is the drop zone clear during hauling?	☐	☐	☐
7.d	Is the equipment used for hauling suitable? Does it have sufficient safe working loads for the lift and is it correctly configured?	☐	☐	☐
7.e	Is equipment secured prior to being released from the haul system?	☐	☐	☐
7.f	Do the methods for hauling equipment minimise strain on the operator?	☐	☐	☐

8.0 Securing, Carrying and Storing Work Equipment while Working in the Tree

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
8.a	Are tool lanyards suitably rated and free from defect?	☐	☐	☐
8.b	Is equipment only attached to the operator's harness via approved connection points?	☐	☐	☐
8.c	Has provision been made to allow the tool/equipment to be positioned high on the operator's harness?	☐	☐	☐
8.d	Are blades covered where appropriate?	☐	☐	☐
8.e	Is equipment secure to reduce the risk of accidental release?	☐	☐	☐

9.0 Handling Tools in the Tree

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
9.a	Has the aerial operator implemented the risk hierarchy when using tools in the tree?	☐	☐	☐
9.b	Is the aerial operator's position appropriate in relation to the cutting equipment being used?	☐	☐	☐
9.c	Do operator handling and the fall protection system in use account for reactive forces that may occur?	☐	☐	☐
9.d	Is the aerial operator employing suitable measures to prevent equipment being taken with severed sections?	☐	☐	☐

10.0 Chainsaw Use

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
10.a	Is machinery appropriately warmed up and checked before being sent up to the aerial operator?	☐	☐	☐
10.b	Are chainsaws started using correct techniques?	☐	☐	☐
10.c	Are top-handled chainsaws being used appropriately, i.e. is two-handed use the norm?	☐	☐	☐
10.d	If a chainsaw is used one-handed, is that justifiable?	☐	☐	☐

11.0 Cutting Methods

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
11.a	Can an operator explain the cutting method they intend to use?	☐	☐	☐
11.b	Before they begin the task, has the operator fully considered the factors that will influence branch or section movement?	☐	☐	☐
11.c	Are the chosen cutting techniques appropriate?	☐	☐	☐
11.d	Will the operator maintain control over severed sections?	☐	☐	☐

12.0 Trapped Cutting Equipment

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
12.a	Are aerial operators aware of the procedures for dealing with trapped cutting tools?	☐	☐	☐
12.b	Is a handsaw carried by the climber to assist with releasing trapped machinery?	☐	☐	☐
12.c	Can trapped machinery be dealt with safely and efficiently by the aerial operator?	☐	☐	☐

13.0 Pull/Tag Lines

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
13.a	Is every tag line used:			
	a. subject to pre-use checks to confirm its condition is safe for use?	☐	☐	☐
	b. long enough for the intended task?	☐	☐	☐
	c. of an appropriate strength to ensure that it does not fail when used?	☐	☐	☐
13.b	Has the aerial operator securely attached the pull line?	☐	☐	☐
13.c	Are clear drop zones maintained throughout the duration of the task?	☐	☐	☐

14.0 Tape Slings

Ref.	Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
14.a	Is a tape sling used in appropriate circumstances?	☐	☐	☐
14.b	Are slings:			
	a. subject to pre-use checks to confirm their condition is safe for use?	☐	☐	☐
	b. designated for rigging applications?	☐	☐	☐
	c. subject to loads only within their safe working load?	☐	☐	☐

Notes

Date of observations:			
Location:			
Observer's name:		Signature:	
Who is being observed?			
Comments:			
Actions:			
Reference:			
Actions completed date:			
Confirmed by:		Signature:	

Further information

This safety guide is one of a series produced by the **Arboricultural Association** (AA). There is also a wide range of additional safety and technical information in relation to arboriculture on the AA website: **www.trees.org.uk**
For safety information in relation to forestry visit the **Forest Industry Safety Accord** (FISA) website: **www.ukfisa.com**

For more general information about health and safety related to tree work, visit the **Health and Safety Executive** website: **www.hse.gov.uk/treework/index.htm**

Further reading

Industry Code of Practice for Arboriculture – Tree work at height (second edition, May 2020)

Technical Guide 1: *Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue*

Technical Guide 2: *Use of Tools in the Tree*

Technical Guide 3: *Rigging and Dismantling*

Technical Guide 4: *Use of Mobile Cranes in Tree Work*

Technical Guide 5: *Use of Mobile Elevating Work Platforms in Tree Work*

FISA 802: *Emergency Planning*

FISA 805: *Training and Certification*