

Keeping arborists safe during tree removal in residential and recreational settings

Removing trees in any situation is inherently high-risk work. In residential and recreational settings, arborists often face an increased risk if the tree is in poor health, dead, or decaying. The risk is even higher with larger trees and a limited work area. If you identify the hazards and risks, use appropriate control measures, and check that workers are qualified, you can ensure that workers go home safely at the end of the workday.

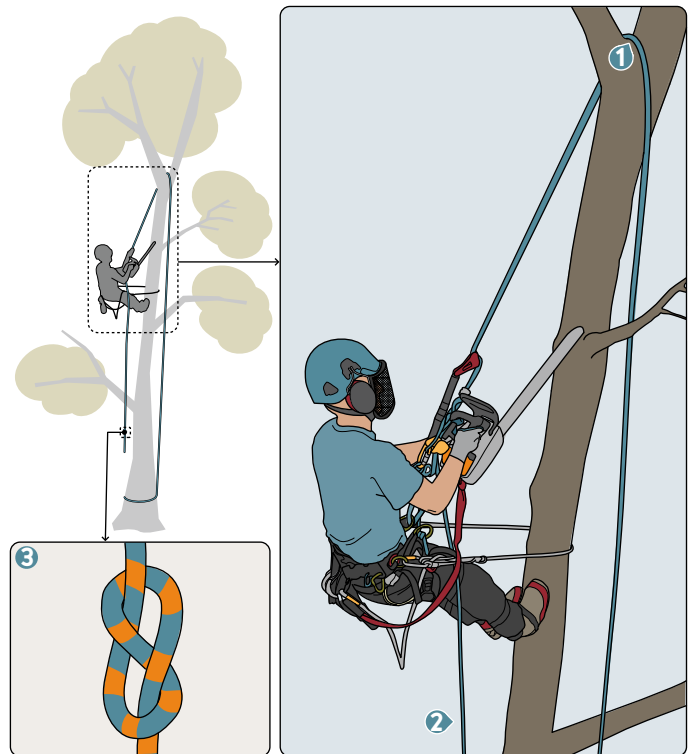
Employer responsibilities

It is an employer’s responsibility to ensure that an arborist is qualified for the work being done. Qualified means being knowledgeable of the work — including the risks and how to control them — from education, training, and/or experience. A qualified arborist has knowledge and experience in tree climbing and climbing systems; in pruning, repairing, or maintaining trees; and in taking down parts of trees or a whole tree in pieces. To fall trees with a diameter more than 15 cm (6 in.) measured 30 cm (12 in.) from the base, you must be certified to the BC Faller Training Standard. For arborists, this means getting a falling and bucking endorsement through HortEducation.ca.

During on-the-job training, a trainee arborist must be directly supervised by a qualified arborist.

Assessing the risk

The arborist must first identify the hazards and assess the particular risks posed by the tree or



When climbing a tree, check that anchor points are suitable for the load and a stopper knot is at the end of each climbing line.

- 1 Anchor point
- 2 Climbing line
- 3 Stopper knot

the section of the tree being removed. Can you safely fall the tree, or should you remove it in pieces? Can you remove it in pieces from an elevating work platform, or do you need to climb the tree?

If you need to climb the tree, can it withstand the loads? Look at the structure of the tree and consider any species-specific defects or weaknesses.

The tree-climbing plan

After identifying the hazards and risks, the arborist will determine the most appropriate climbing system and equipment. The tree-climbing plan must document this information and be communicated to each worker involved.

The plan must include:

- How the specific risks will be eliminated or minimized
- The tree-climbing system being used
- The type and location of the initial anchor point
- The names and duties of each worker involved
- The PPE (personal protective equipment) being used
- How the arborist will communicate with workers on the ground
- Emergency response and rescue information

Climbing equipment must be:

- Manufactured for use in a tree climbing system
- Compatible with the other components
- Able to support the loads likely to be imposed
- Kept clean and in good condition

Do not use the equipment for any purpose other than climbing.

Safe work practices

When falling a whole tree, you must follow the requirements of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the BC Faller Training Standard. This ensures that you will maintain control of the tree until it has fully committed to the direction of fall.

When climbing a tree, you must follow the tree-climbing plan. Before each work shift, inspect the climbing equipment. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions. Once you enter the tree:

- Determine that each subsequent anchor point is suitable for the loads to be applied to it
- Ensure that each climbing line uses at least one independent anchor point that will keep the climbing line in that location (the line may move through the anchor point but not away from it)
- Position the tree-climbing system to minimize any swing-fall hazards (i.e., swinging into an obstruction)
- Tie a properly dressed and set stopper knot in the end of each climbing line
- Always be secured to the tree
- Only use a cutting tool when tied into the tree with two means of securement

Regulatory requirements

Specific regulatory requirements that apply to the arborist industry are included in [Part 26](#) of the OHS Regulation, which covers forestry operations and similar activities, and in related guidelines.

Resources

- BC Faller Training Standard, [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
- [BC Faller Training Standard Video Series](#)