

Case 452. 52-year-old owner of a tree trimming/landscaping service died when he was ejected from the bucket of an aerial lift while working approximately 15 feet above the ground.

A 52-year-old male owner of a tree trimming/landscaping service died when he was ejected from the bucket of an aerial lift while working approximately 15 feet above the ground. The decedent and his crew were performing a tree removal from a residential property. The tree was located between the sidewalk and the street curb. The decedent was elevated in the basket of an aerial lift mounted on a TEREX articulating arm. The articulating arm had a fixed tie off point next to the connection for the basket. The bucket of the aerial lift became wedged between two limbs growing in the shape of a "Y". A coworker attempted to reposition the basket with the articulating arm controls, but gave back the control of the arm/basket to the decedent. In trying to free the bucket, the decedent reversed the boom and turned the bucket around. This caused the basket controls to operate in the opposite direction compared to normal operation. Instead of raising the bucket, he was actually moving the arm/bucket in a downward motion. Another coworker noted the pressure on the limb under the basket/arm. When the basket did not come free, the decedent attempted to cut away a portion of one of the limbs at the base of the bucket to free the basket. While cutting the limb, the limb broke and contacted the articulated arm, which caused the bucket to move downward approximately 10 feet and then spring back upwards and forward, ejecting the decedent from the basket. He landed on the sidewalk. Emergency response was called and the decedent was transported to a local hospital where he was declared dead. He was not wearing a safety harness or lanyard.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue a citation as the firm ceased to exist when the owner died.